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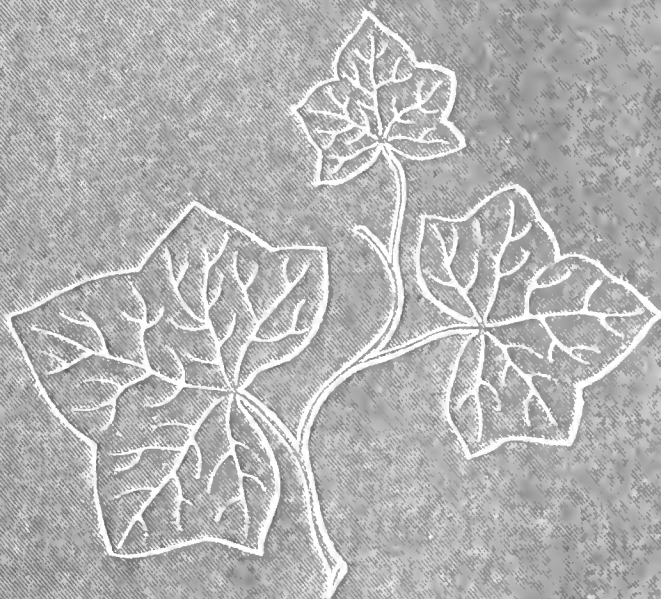
OVER THE HILLS

TO

BROADWAY

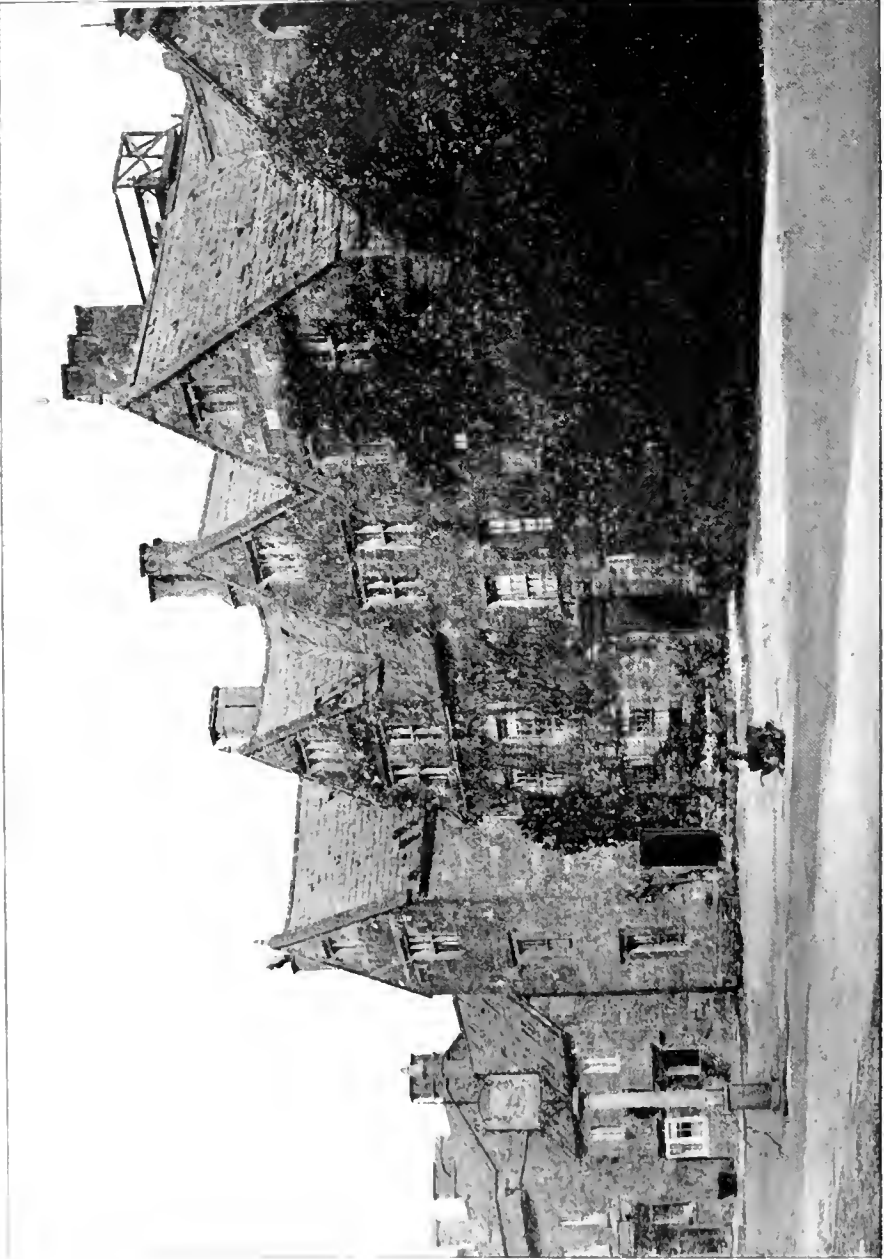
BY THE

Rev. James S. Stone D.D.





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LOS ANGELES



Over the Hills to Broadway

BY THE

REV. JAMES S. STONE, D.D.

"Who can live in heart so glad
As the merry country lad?"

PHILADELPHIA :
PORTER & COATES,

1893.

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Note.

THEY who have read the "Heart of Merrie England" will scarcely need to be told in what part of England to look for the places named in the following pages. The villages lie near the borderland of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, and if the reader will take his map and find Stratford-upon-Avon, he will see Shipston-on-Stour lying south ten miles, a little to the east, and Evesham more to the west of the same point of the compass. South of a line drawn between the last two towns are the places hereinafter referred to. My gossip will be better enjoyed if the country travelled over be thus ascertained.

The August spoken of was that of 1892, and most of this account was written at or very near the time—all of it within the region traversed. I have made little revision of my original sketches. They were written in pencil, and mostly as they were written they went to the printer. Possibly, as a result of this, my readers will find little to appreciate except the freshness of the work. I have taken for granted that whoever took the trouble to run over this booklet would be my friend, with whom I might sit in my study or, if I had a garden, under my own ivy, and at my will either laugh or talk seriously. Such an one would have kindly feeling enough not to misunderstand me.

The illustrations, made expressly for this article, are taken from photographs secured by me while at Broadway.

I have to thank the proprietors of *The American Church Sunday-School Magazine* for their kind permission to reprint from their journal these pages. Should this reprint prove acceptable further articles of a similar nature will find their way into the magazine and further reprints will be made.

Philadelphia, September 30, 1893.

I FLATTERED all the beauteous country round,
As poets use, the skies, the clouds, the fields,
The happy violets hiding from the roads
The primroses run down to, carrying gold ;
The tangled hedge-rows, where the cows push out
Impatient horns and tolerant churning mouths
'Twixt dripping ash-boughs,—hedge-rows all alive
With birds and gnats and large white butterflies,
Which look as if the May-flower had caught life
And palpitated forth upon the wind ;
Hills, vales, woods, netted in a silver mist,
Farms, granges, doubled up among the hills ;
And cattle grazing in the watered vales,
And cottage-chimneys smoking from the woods,
And cottage-gardens smiling everywhere,
Confused with smell of orchards.

—*Elizabeth Barrett Browning.*

Over the Hills to Broadway.

To one who has been long in city pent,
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
And gentle tale of love and languishment?
Returning home at evening, with an ear
Catching the notes of Philomel,—an eye
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
He mourns that day so soon has glided by,
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
That falls through the clear ether silently.

IN the small hours of a lovely August morning, before the red sun-glow had touched the chimneys or the flowers had shaken off the dew-drops, we made ourselves ready for a day's drive across country to Broadway and back. The townsfolk were scarcely ready for their breakfast when our wagonette, drawn by a good, sound horse from the "Bell," rattled over the pebbles of New Street. As we drove along, a woman with a sunbonnet on her head opened her front door to see who at so early an hour had presumed to disturb the peace. In her hand she had a long fork, the prongs of which pierced a bloater: evidently she had come from the fire where she had been toasting the same. The policeman leaning against a lamp-post in front of the "George" bade us good morrow in tones so civil—that is to say, civil for first thing in the morning—that we shall think more kindly after this of Sir Robert Peel's institution. And yet, somehow or other, better than this neatly-dressed and well-trained constable, a Dogberry would correspond with the ancient appearance and the quiet life of Shipston.

We were soon clear of Sheep Street and out in the country. As it happened we could not have had a more lovely day. Sunshine and cloud were well distributed, the temperature was delightfully pleasant and the roads were free from either mud or dust. There were four of us—one, besides myself, who knew every bit of the way and something of the habits of the people, and the traditions of the neighborhood. Our spirits brightened as we drove gently between the hedgerows, now fresh with green thorn and with blackberry bloom. Briskly ran our grey trotter up the hillocks, and sturdily did he pull up the steeper eminences. The flies at first were troublesome, but a light wind sprang up and carried them off. In the ditches and the sward by the roadside were brilliant poppies and large purple thistles, while ever and anon an oak or an ash, perchance a beech, cast its refreshing shade over the way. Englishmen ought to recognize the loyalty of the ash, for it is said that in the year of Charles the First's execution no ash trees in England bore any keys, and there is a saying in this region which affirms that "if there are no keys or seeds in the ash trees, there will be no king within the twelvemonth." Everybody knows it is a sacred plant; so, too, is yond elder, the thick-clustered berries of which are fast ripening for the wine-vat—the lightning never strikes the tree of which the Cross was made. Sometimes we pass through almost perfect avenues, the giant oaks or elms making gothic arches over the road. The fields displayed the plentifulness of the harvest. Here were green pastures in which were grazing herds or flocks; there were wide expanses of ripening grain, red-brown or golden-yellow, the tall ears heavy with the increase. Many fields were being reaped—the laborers were already at work; soon the bearded barley and the nodding oats will be gathered in. How I wish I could describe the exhilaration which came to us as we beheld scenes so calm and beautiful and varied! Nature is ever skilful and ever kind. Even the drops on the thistle thorns sparkled with diamond-like loveliness. The dandelions, rich and homely, lay in the rank grass beside the white-edged and golden-hearted daisies, brave enough, as it were, to try to laugh away the scorn with which man regards them. And the small fowl, as Dan Chaucer, who so dearly loved the sweet and merry country, called them—the linnets, the yellowhammers and the chaffinches, flit across the road with hearts light as the sunbeams themselves. One's soul gladdens as one looks upon the earth which God has made: "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." See the tiny wren on the hedge-spray! One moment, and it disappears among the green leaves. Once the birds tried to know which

of them could soar into the blue sky the highest ; and the wren, so light and soft, got upon the eagle's back, and when the strong, swift eagle had gone as far as he could towards the sun, far beyond the wild goose and the skylark, then the wren opened her little wings and soared higher still. She won the crown—still abides upon the fragile songster the golden crest ; but for her craftiness it was decreed that ever after, instead of being able to fly over the hedges and bushes, she should be compelled to go through them. Once in a while a covey of partridges whirs over the turnpike. The 1st of September is nigh at hand and the young birds are already strong of wing and firm of flesh. There are from sixteen to eighteen of them in a covey or brood. Not a few of them break their necks or their wings by flying against the telegraph wires. Like hares, they cannot see straight before them ; and, also like hares, they are very timid.

After crossing the Fossway by Porto Bello—where is a dog much feared by strangers and tramps—we quickly came in sight of the farm called Compton Scorpion, but instead of going up Goose Hill, which leads to it, we took the road towards the left and went in the direction of Ebrington. Here we overtook a travelling tinker and his family. He was wheeling a truck on which were the grindstone, soldering irons, stove and other tools and materials needed for his business ; his wife had a child strapped to her back, and, with a bundle of umbrellas under her left arm, by her right hand was leading a boy not much higher than her elbow. A dog, shaggy-haired, with ears and tail reduced to mere stumps, trotted in front of them—a roguish-looking, intelligent individual, grave and silent as a philosopher, that would, no doubt, steal, fight, bite or beg without hesitation, save such as comes from wisdom and experience. As we drive by, the man touches his cap—all these pedestrian tradesmen are neither rude nor wicked. Some of them are thrifty and industrious, living in the towns in the winter, and in the summertime, much to the convenience of the villagers, perambulating the countryside and turning over many an honest penny by mending kettles and sharpening knives. If, when on their travels, they do not go to church, that is mostly because the people who frequent God's house do not desire to see beside them a seedy and perhaps an uncleanly-looking stranger ; happily, while man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart. The other evening, when driving along the Foss from Moreton, we passed a gipsy company encamped for the night on the roadside ; they had a roofed-in wagon—a cottage on wheels—and behind it was erected a small tent.

Close by blazed a fire over which was suspended a pot, and around which were four or five men, some women, two or three dogs, and a number of children. The horses were grazing not far away, and in a cage hanging on the door of the wagon was a magpie. These people looked for all the world like Christians, as much so as did the lords and ladies we saw some months since driving in Hyde Park. They were not ill-clad, nor, as they waited for their supper, did they seem to be other than happy. Some were whittling sticks, some were smoking, some talking, and others busying themselves in various ways. One woman was mending a coat while deep in gossip with an elderly crony by her side peeling turnips. Another woman was tying together the wildflowers which the children had gathered, and on her face lighted through a gap in the hedge a bit of sunshine, making her look even pretty and cheerful. A man was trying to rivet afresh the ribs of a parasol which looked as though it had once shaded the brow of a countess. Up to us ran four or five boys and girls begging for some gift; their swarthy complexions and their persistence remind us of Italy. They take the pence we give them, bow, curtsy and go back to the fireside. Are these people expected to go to heaven when they die? I am told that these men and women are nearly always married by the Church, and that they bring their children to Baptism; but I never saw such as they at Divine service—except, possibly, in the countries of southern Europe,—and I almost fancy that society has reached the conclusion that where lavender water and white collars are not, the soul does not abide.

In the fields are feeding flocks of geese and crowds of rooks—white and black together; one set eating the grass and the other set picking the worms. The bright day bids us hasten from the moral. Though late in the season, a cuckoo starts out of a tree near by us and passes infield. And there, to our right, lies Ebrington, a pleasantly situated village—though the Gotham of the neighborhood—about five miles from Shipston. It is a little out of our way, but it is one of those places that must not be passed by.

As with most of the villages we shall see to-day, three words describe it sufficiently: quiet, old and tiny. The church, which contains some Norman work, and which was built by the brethren of Pershore Abbey, has a plain tower, and is chiefly remarkable for some comfortable and well-carved oak pews, put up in the fifteenth century, and for a few monuments. It once had a Jacobean three-decker and a gallery, but these have been removed. The effigy in stone, on the north side of the altar, is

that of Sir John Fortescue, Lord Chancellor of England in the time of Henry VI. He bought the manor in 1450, and, having obtained some fame as an expert lawyer, a loyal Lancastrian, and the author of several books of a legal character—in the literary style of which books he shows himself under the influence of the early renaissance—he died there about the age of ninety. Among other opinions, he held that the safeguard against rebellion is the well-being of the commons, and that “ther may no realme prospere, or be worshipful and noble, under a poer kyng.” Besides this monument, are others to the memory of members of the family of Keytes, once of some importance hereabouts, and, as one of them left the milk of ten milch cows to the poor of the parish forever, we may suppose, of considerable generosity.

Among the epitaphs in the churchyard, two are not unfrequently copied into the local newspapers. The first is on the stone of the man who made the church clock :

This world's a city full of crooked streets ;
Death is ye market place where all men meet ;
If life was merchandise that men could buy,
Only the rich would live, the poor must die.

The other comes from the grave of a man who died in 1860, aged eighty-four years, and contains a grammatical error common enough in this district :

From our hard afflictions
Unto a place of rest, the Lord has set us free ;
He hath crowned us with a crown of joy,
A happy change for we.

In the year 1676 there was published in London a quarto of twenty-three pages, containing a story which made no small stir in the day when the events it narrates were enacted, and which even now is not forgotten in this neighborhood. As this is almost the only bit of history of which this place can boast, I wish I could sit by one of the cottage doors, in the shade of the trellised honeysuckle, and peruse the quaintly worded and startling lines, even though it were in the copy given in the Harleian Miscellany. Thus it runs: On Thursday, the sixteenth day of the August of 1660, Mr. William Harrison, a gentleman of seventy years, of much gravity, and of strong Puritanical proclivities, steward to the Viscountess of Campden, started from Campden to collect rents at Charingworth, the other side of Ebrington, from the tenants of his lady. As

he did not return in good time, his wife sent her servant, a John Perry, to meet him; but nothing further that night was heard of either master or man. The next day Harrison's son came from Campden to Ebrington, and, having found Perry—who, it seems, because of the darkness of the night and a great mist, had not been able to pursue his search until morning—obtained some information of places where the steward had been the day before. Nothing, however, was seen of him; but soon they heard of a poor woman leeing in the field, who had picked up on the highway near a great furze bush, a hat, a neckband and a comb. These were at once recognized as Mr. Harrison's, and, as they were more or less hacked and blood-stained, it was concluded that the steward had been murdered. Great excitement prevailed, and the country was ransacked far and near, but the body could nowhere be found. John Perry was arrested on suspicion, and after having declared, first, that a tinker had killed his master, and then that a gentleman's servant of the neighborhood had robbed and murdered him, he confessed that the crime had been committed by his own mother and brother. He gave a strikingly circumstantial account of the affair. His mother and brother, he said, had urged him repeatedly to rob Mr. Harrison. They were poor, and when on this occasion they heard of the steward going to collect the rents, they determined to waylay him. John consented to the robbery, but not to the murder. In the dusky evening, when the unfortunate gentleman had come within a bow-shot of Campden Church, Richard Perry, and Joan, the mother, fell upon him. The steward cried out, "Ah, rogues, will you kill me?" John, who had just come up, begged of his brother to save his master's life. In vain; the old man was strangled and his body was, by Richard Perry and his mother, thrown either into a mill-sink or into the fish-ponds; John knew not which. John went into the hen-roost for a while, and afterwards he took his master's hat, band and comb, and put them where they were found by the gleaner. The mill-sink was searched and the fish-ponds were dragged, but without success.

Richard Perry and Joan were at once taken before the justice. They protested their innocence, but John swore that he had told nothing but the truth; and on the way from the magistrate's house a ball of ink—coarse tape—fell out of Richard's pocket. It was found to have a slip-knot at the end. On seeing it, John declared it was the string wherewith Richard had strangled the steward. Moreover, the day after this inquiry, being Sunday, the prisoners were taken to church in Campden, the minister having a desire to urge them to repentance and confession, and on their

return, as they passed Richard's house, two of his children met him, but scarcely had they touched him, "when," according to the narrative, "on a sudden, both their noses fell a bleeding, which was looked upon as ominous."

So at the assizes the mother and her two sons were sentenced to be hanged, and a few days after they were brought to the gallows erected on Broadway hill in sight of Campden. We shall pass the spot by-and-by. The mother, being reputed a witch, and having, as was supposed, so bewitched her sons that they could confess nothing more while she lived, was first hanged. Richard died declaring his innocence and begging of his brother to tell the truth. John, with "a dogged and surly carriage," said he was not obliged to confess anything; but before the noose was placed around his neck, he said he knew nothing either of the death or of the whereabouts of his master. In the face of his former confession no heed seems to have been taken of this statement.

Thus was avenged the blood of this aged and staid steward, and throughout these parts everybody was pleased that justice had been done. When the winds came down the hillside the bodies hanging by the highway swung to and fro, the chains, grown rusty with the rains and dews, creaked, and the big kites and buzzards found it hard to hold on to their prey. And the wayfarer looked up at the woman and her two sons—a ghastly sight, now that their clothes were torn and their flesh well-nigh off their bones—and he thanked God that judgment was meted out to evil doers and resolved never to do aught that would bring him to so dire an end. Now comes the curious part of this melancholy history. Two years after the execution of the Perrys the steward quietly walks into his own house at Campden and to the surprise and consternation of everyone tells an extraordinary tale. As I think of it I recall that scene in the fifth act of Mrs. Centlivre's "The Man's Bewitched," where Sir Jeffrey Constant, by some supposed to have been dead, appeared to his farmer Roger and to his steward Trusty: look it up, kind reader, and enjoy more than the smell of brimstone. Mr. Harrison declared that instead of encountering the Perrys on the night of his supposed murder, he had been seized by some strangers as he came through the narrow passage amongst Ebrington furzes, who bound and blindfolded him and, carrying him to Deal, put him on board a ship going to Smyrna. Here he became slave to a physician of eighty-seven years of age, who had been in England and who now put him to keep his still-house and to pick cotton-wool; but the venerable Mahometan dying, Mr. Harrison contrived to escape and after many strange adventures at last reached home.

The mystery has never been cleared up. In the tract which gives the story, notwithstanding his own plain and graphic description of his capture, exile and return, doubts are expressed whether the steward was ever out of England; and this partly upon the ground that an old and an infirm man was scarcely worth spiriting away, and that the price fetched for him—seven pounds according to his account—would not have paid for the trouble and charge of conveying him to the seaside. As the son succeeded in the stewardship it was supposed by some that he may have had part in the abduction, and yet it is hard to think that he should have consented to his father's transportation or to the death of three innocent persons. Others found it difficult to believe that Mr. Harrison purposely absented himself from his employment and forsook his family, for he had lived plentifully and happily in his service for over fifty years; he had the reputation of being a just and a faithful servant, and in his house he left behind him a considerable sum of his lady's money. But what about Perry's confession? He secured the hanging of himself, his mother and his brother. This seems incredible, and the more we think of the whole matter the darker it becomes. Now it can never be explained until the judgment comes.

So profound a mystery seems out of place in a village where cats walk on the tops of garden walls, catching flies and arching their backs at caterpillars, and there appear no boys to molest them; but human life is at bottom much the same everywhere, as said an old play-character: "I have known poor Hob, in the country, that has worn hob-nails on's shoes, have as much villany in's head as he that wears gold buttons in's cap." Move aside the fresh-fallen leaves or the straw which the wind has blown on the way, and you will discover the trail of the serpent—even where the elm-shadows soften the glare and the hen chuckles as she finds grubs for her hungry brood. Every village has had its tragedy; yet the ivy creeps over the church-walls, the bumble-bee makes her nest in the mud-wall like as the martin bores the sand-bank and the field-mouse nestles among the roots of the hawthorn, and in the garden blooms the great-faced sunflower and the sweet-scented carnation. Nature goes on the same as ever, and still the delver is in the ditch, and the fox hears the tally-ho. It is well, and I shall not break my heart because in yonder cottage, where the swallows sit on the chimney, which scarcely rises above the green and brown thatch, and the vine tendrils grow about the hinges of the little diamond-paned windows, and indoors doubtless are coffers where the moth sleeps and lays her eggs amongst bunches of lavender and

winter flannels, and the crockery is either warm yellow or willow blue, and the cider flows through a wooden tap,—I say, I shall not break my heart because once something was done in that house at which men's blood ran cold. If I hear of such, I shall get out into the sunshine. I shall thank God that for me the birds still sing, and the blue sky is the floor of heaven. I shall still believe that life is "a rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded."

Therefore I am ready enough to believe that it was not through its fault that Ebrington became one of the haunts of the Night Coach. Probably the gentleman who drives that equipage loves good roads and pleasant scenery, and finding such in this neighborhood, he simply seeks here his own satisfaction. It has never been ascertained who this individual is, but he has been seen many times in different parts of the country. Years ago, a cobbler at Acton, in Suffolk, on passing in the evening a park-gate, heard a rushing and grinding of stones, with a cracking like a body of men walking over dry sticks, for which, considering that not a breath of wind was stirring, he could not account. So frightened did he become, that he stood stock still. The sound came nearer. Then, suddenly the gates swung open, and out came first two groomis on horses, and then a carriage drawn by four large horses, while two men rode behind. But, much to the horror of the poor cobbler, he discovered that none of the horsemen had a head. As the coach passed him, he saw inside of it a gentleman and a lady, sitting side by side, but, like their attendants, without heads. The whips cracked, and the strange procession rapidly passed out of sight and hearing. The shoemaker hastened home, and were it not that others remembered that the old folks had spoken of having known people who had seen the same phenomenon, it might be supposed that it had been a dream. I am half-inclined to dislike a legend which represents gentlefolks and their servants without heads; but then these people lived in olden time, and Bishop Latimer, in one of his sermons, says: "There be some gentlemen in England which think themselves born to nothing else but to have good cheer in this world, to go a hawking and hunting." Now the times have changed, and gentlemen not only have heads, but they also use them for better things than shooting pigeons or worrying foxes. The legend, however, is no idle tale. It is well known that, one misty morning in the year of grace 1780, a farmer, walking across the open country near Ebrington, saw an old-fashioned coach drawn by six horses. This did not strike him as singular, until he saw the coach pass rapidly through the furze bushes to the brink of the steepest part of the hill, on

the other side of which there could be for it nothing but instant destruction. The farmer hastened to the edge, but he could discover nothing—not a fragment of either carriage or horse, and, what was as strange, not a trace in the ground of a wheel or a hoof. He knew that his eyes were good, for darnel did not grow among his wheat, and darnel, as everybody since the time of Plautus and Ovid knows, is bad for the sight. Then he realized that he had seen the Night Coach. It is a pity that he had not thought of this a little earlier, for it would have been a satisfaction to have known whether this carriage had four wheels like most earthly coaches, or only three as had that in which, driven by a long-nosed driver, certain monks were seen to cross the Rhine at Spires. No one seems, for many years, to have caught a sight of this coach, though commonly enough settle down upon this country-side thick fogs in which trees, ricks, cottages and cattle are to the spectator distorted into shapes fantastical and weird enough to inspire the simplest rustic imagination. I do not remember how many steeds there are to Thor's chariot, but I know that when in this region the clouds lower and the flashings of the horses' hoofs are seen, the rattle and the rumble of the wheels make one think that the day of doom has come.

The villagers are superstitious; when have men hoed among cabbages and drunk decoctions of dandelion roots, and not been so? Said Terence, some two thousand years ago: "What unlucky prodigies have befallen us! A strange black dog came into the house! A snake fell from the tiles through the skylight! A hen crowed!" Wherever in a cottage you see hanging a rope of onions, there you may be sure are to be found omens and wonders; the good man will take heed over which shoulder he first sees the new moon, and which boot he first draws on; the housewife will watch the coals in the fire, and look to it that she spill not the salt, nor stand in the cupboard the basins brim up. Not so long since, a man saw a great bird, probably a hawk, hovering over a house not far from Ebrington; he told me somebody would die in that house within three days. The day after, the mistress thereof breathed her last. A generation since, mothers hereabouts passed their children through a gap in a hawthorn hedge to cure them of the whooping-cough, sick people swallowed quantities of shot to keep down the lungs, and old men carried in their pocket a potato to prevent rheumatism, while but a little earlier, folks would lay two straws across to see if the ancient woman coming along would prove her witchery by avoiding them. King James the First knew that witches could ride to the East Indies in egg-shells, and change themselves into cats and hares;

and Sir Roger de Coverley told "Spectator" that Moll White—who got into the dairymaid's churn, and who had a tabby-cat of bad repute—had been often brought before him for making children spit pins and giving maids the nightmare.

We will take a tumbler of hard cider—cooling and refreshing on a day like this. Ebrington has some things that tend to the comfort of the creature, and the good woman hands over the gate glasses of that beverage which, as it comes from the finest and tarest of apples, is, on a summer morning, sufficient to make a king happy. "Yabberton isn't such a bad place after all," she says, "is it?" "'Tis good sleeping in a whole skin," quoth Dick Coomes, and we were afraid to say much, for Ebrington people, knowing that the folk of the villages adjacent think lightly of their wisdom, are very touchy. It is dangerous, for instance, to ask a native the way to Ebrington, or the price of wheelbarrows. I am reminded of a little colloquy I heard at Jersey City between two newsboys. They had been having a few words, partly in fun and partly in earnest, and one called out to the other: "Do you know what the rain said to the dust one day?" "No." "If I come down upon you, I shall turn you into mud." It is impossible to say what might happen to the man who should stir up the ire of an inhabitant of this place.

The merry and naughty Poggio, who more than four hundred and fifty years ago served as a secretary in the Papal Court, and who ought therefore to have laughed less and to have been more circumspect, gave the world some curious tales, over which they who know the Latin in which he had the consideration to write them, are apt to become hilarious. Among these facetiæ was one of a peasant, who, having worked in his field till noon, unyoked his oxen, tied his plough upon his ass, which he bestrode, and started for home. After a while the rustic perceived that the load was too great for the poor donkey; so he alighted, placed the plough on his own shoulder, and mounted again his donkey, saying: "Thou canst get on now; for it is no longer thou, it is I who carry the plough." The same author tells of the man who, to please others, first, on a donkey which he was taking unladen to market to sell, set his son; then put off the youth and mounted himself; then had the boy get up beside him; and at last, both getting off, tied the donkey's feet, hung the beast on a staff, one end of which he put on his son's shoulder and the other on his own, and thus proceeded on his way. Irritated by the further banter of the spectators, he pitched the ass, with his legs tied, over a bridge into the river and went home. He pleased nobody and lost his donkey into the bargain.

The story runs that a man once walked from Ebrington to Campden with a wheelbarrow on his back. This he did to please himself, and as the day was very warm his pleasure was not unalloyed with pain. Next to tumbling over a barrow in the dark comes carrying one; try either, and experience will not only teach, but also satisfy. At the end of his journey, putting his burden down and wiping the sweat from his face, when he was asked why he had not wheeled the barrow along the ground he replied: "I'd nur a thawt o' that." This gave rise to the following precious rhyme, which I carefully took down at the dictation of one of our company—first observing that in some versions the first line, instead of the word "fool," has the word "maulm," which is a local expression for a stupid person:

A Yubberton fool to Campden went :
To buy a wheelbarrow was his intent ;
And the barrow he carried from town to town,
For fear the wheel should bruise the ground.

Ebrington had its noodles as well as Gotham in Nottinghamshire, and Belmont in Switzerland. Odd drolleries are told of the place where they soaped—some say boiled—the donkey to get his harness off, but they are not peculiar to this village. How these stories came to be attached here I do not know. But, utterly unaware that the same legends have been told elsewhere and from time immemorial, the neighbors declare that it was Ebrington people who devised the plan of hurdling or pinning in the cuckoo so as to secure perpetual summer, and that it was an Ebrington man who, to get a cheese, proceeded to rake out of the pond the reflection of the moon. It is not here known that another man, who likewise mistook the figure of the moon for a green cheese, fetched his friends to help him to draw it out. They raked until a passing cloud sank the cheese, and then went home sad and disappointed. In another instance, as we are reminded by the author of the "Book of Noodles," certain townspeople imprisoned an ass for drinking up the moon, whose reflection, appearing in the water, was covered with a cloud while the ass was drinking. The next day the burghers met together to consider the matter, and to prescribe punishment for the beast according to his deserts. Then it was declared that as it was not fit the town should lose its moon, the ass should be cut open and the moon he had swallowed taken out of him, which was done accordingly. This story has not reached Ebrington; the thistles there are still fresh.

On one occasion, desirous of imitating the illuminations which some-

times are made at Shipston, the Ebringtonians secured four boltings of straw to the pinnacles of the church tower, and set them on fire. A bolting is as much as can be bound or bolted by a band of straw. The blaze did more than amuse the village. Soon the lead on the roof began to melt, and the old women ran out with their buckets to catch the soft water. It is said that traces of this escapade were discovered at the restoration of the church. At another time the people spread manure around the church tower, that it might be forced to grow as high as the one at Campden. A heavy rain fell in the night, the manure sank, and the next morning everybody was satisfied that the scheme had been entirely successful. This last experiment has been tried elsewhere.

We must hasten away from Ebrington, or we shall never this day get over the ground laid out for us. The cows beneath the trees have a busy time with the flies. From the highway by Puddlicote Hill we behold the church tower of Chipping Campden, rising nobly from amongst the trees and giving earnest that in that sacred fane, and in the town to which it belongs, there is much which will delight the artist, the antiquary and the historian, and stir with pride the inmost soul both of the Churchman and of the lover of village peace and beauty. The hopes excited are not disappointed. Chipping Campden, as it is one of the oldest, so is it also one of the most interesting towns in this region.

Splendid are the trees by the roadside. Like arches, their thick, leafy branches spread over the way and break the force of the sunbeams. The churchyard is high above the road, and around the steps by the gate at the northwest corner is a group of children and women. Further along the western front, at the principal entrance to the churchyard, stands a carriage; near it are more women and children, chattering and laughing after the manner of simple country folk. An aged man, in gaiters and smock frock, has one eye on us and the other on the jackdaws perched so gravely on the great tower. We get out of our wagonette and discover that the cause of the excitement is a wedding; whereupon we hasten into the church, for we are not free from the curiosity occasioned by such an event. This is the third we have chanced to see this summer. On Christmas Day, 1665, Mr. Samuel Pepys had a similar pleasure, and he wrote: "The young people so merry one with another! and strange to see what delight we married people have to see these poor fools decoyed into our condition, every man and woman gazing and smiling at them." Samuel had some experience at match-making, as all readers of his diary know well; he was cynical on the subject. As we pass by the tombstones into

the church, snatches come into our mind of Sir John Suckling's ballad upon a wedding; we think of Whitsun-ales and mice-like feet, and Katherine pears and—rapid association—of Pretty Bessie, the Blind Beggar's daughter of Bednal-Green.

The young couple, accompanied by a youth and a maiden of the same age and by the parish clerk, stand at the entrance of the choir. A few people are scattered about the church. The priest is reading the Preface to the Marriage Office—a plain, straightforward homily in which considerable information is given in a few minutes. It is not seemly to have Rachel married before Leah, and I hope, therefore, if the bride has an elder sister, that she has been warned already to be “not afraid with any amazement,” or, to use the old saying, that she has visited the church-porch, otherwise the elder maiden might unhappily wonder at the number and species of apes which will be allotted her, and, perhaps, in carrying out ancient custom, be tempted to make a maulm of herself by dancing barefooted at the wedding-feast, and earlier by soiling her green stockings at a jig in the hog-trough. No doubt the bees have been told of this wedding, and their hives have been decorated with a ribbon or a marygold. The sun shines bright enough to make any bride happy; and as, so we may presume, she was not present when the bans were published, and this is not a Sunday, and no grave is open in the churchyard, she has much to encourage her in the hope that her life will be long and joyful. Her groom, however, is not a little shy. This is a new experience for him, and his coat is tight across the shoulders and rather short-waisted. He speaks diffidently, as though the august rite had overpowered him—for the clergyman speaks solemnly and sympathetically. These country parsons are in touch with their parishioners, knowing their joys and sorrows, their weaknesses and, better than all else, their virtues; and they impart to their ministrations an impressive awe and a becoming dignity. It is not often, indeed, that people married according to the Anglican ritual—that is to say, when the ceremony is performed by a priest before the altar, and the sacramental and holy nature of wedlock is recognized,—venture to seek for a divorce; among these peasants, never. Most of the petitions which come before the secular courts—which alone take cognizance of such matters—are for the disannulling of civil or separatist marriages. This man responds with a seriousness and resolution which become one who stands in the presence of Almighty God. By-and-by the parson holds out the book for the ring. The groom is taken unawares. For the moment he has evidently forgotten that part of the ceremony,

though as likely as not he made a journey to Stratford especially to buy the circlet of gold that shall both adorn the heart-veined finger of the bride and express the endlessness and reality of his own affection. Puritanism was as bitter against wedding rings as against mincepies; but no English girl would think of being married without this token and pledge. With difficulty the blushing youth got the ring out of his waistcoat pocket, and when he had done so, it was so tightly bound in and out with tissue paper that it took some time to get it ready to put on the bride's finger. In the meanwhile the girl's neck and cheeks reddened and the clergyman's patience weakened. The parish clerk tried to help the hapless groom, so did the bridesmaid; but more haste, less speed. At last, much to the relief of all concerned, it reached its destined place, there to remain, if evil was to be averted, for at least a year and a day.

Did we laugh at the incident? Now, my good reader, you must not suppose either that we would do such a thing in church, even behind a pillar, or that it may be said of us "The priest forgets that e'er he was a clerk." Some years ago, when in Toronto, the writer officiated at a wedding in a church packed with people. When the time came for the giving of the ring, the groom hesitated, then searched his pockets once and again, and then got the best man to see if he had not the ring about him. The excitement in the congregation increased. Some one offered to lend a ring for the occasion, but the bride would have no substitute. At last the groom remembered that he had put the ring into a waistcoat pocket which he had changed when dressing for church. Nothing was to be done but for the best man to take a carriage and drive to the groom's house. Then followed fifteen of the most painful minutes man could ever experience. The situation was ludicrous; but witnesses are not wanting to testify that not the faintest ripple stirred the stubble through which the end of the pen has been thrust more than once during the writing of this paragraph. The fun took place in an arm chair a little later.

The church is very neat, light and clean. It occupies the site of one built much earlier, for Campden was a town of considerable condition in the first Norman reign, and there is evidence which tends to show its existence at least four centuries before the writing of Domesday. A more instructive piece of Perpendicular Gothic could not be desired. Happily it is in good condition and gives evidence of being held by trustworthy hands. There are some monuments to the lords of Campden in the chapel at the east end of the south aisle: one an altar tomb under a canopy supported by twelve marble pillars, and on the pediments and tablets adorned

with the arms of the good couple buried therein, and inscriptions to their memories. Some have thought that this monument was by Nicholas Stone; but there is little evidence for this assumption, unless it be claimed that at that time the great sculptor was the only one in England who could do a really fine and artistic piece of work. Against the wall at the foot of this tomb is a curious monument representing a cabinet with open folding doors, within which are statues of a lord and lady. In the chancel is the largest and seventh oldest brass in the county of Gloucester, commemorating William Grevil, who therein is described as the "flower of the wool merchants of all England," and who, having built this church, died in 1401. The bandage around a lady's finger in one of the busts, and which was probably a purse thus carried in the early part of the seventeenth century, gave rise to a tradition like to one concerning another like it in Westminster Abbey: that she died from the prick of a needle. There are a few busts, mural tablets and brasses, as well as monuments other than these, which I had not time to note.

Many interesting bits of information of the church and town may be seen in a book, entitled "Rambles among the Cotswolds," just reprinted from the *Evesham Journal* by its author, Mr. Ernest Belcher, Assistant Master of the Grammar School in this town, and one of the most industrious and worthy antiquaries of the neighborhood, even though his years be comparatively few. The articles came under my notice as they appeared in the columns of the newspaper just mentioned, and I am glad to be indebted to him for some facts and suggestions concerning two or three of the places mentioned in this chapter. From him I get an inscription, long since uncipherable, in which a worthy Thomas Smyth, lord of the manor about the middle of the fifteenth century, commemorated his offspring. He, his wife and children are buried in a canopied tomb in the chancel, and on it are effigies of the whole family; and once were these lines:

Little pretty Betty, Dorothy and Anne,
Mary and Moselyn, and little Gizzey Gamme,
Richard and Robert, Geoffrey and John,
Edward, William, and little pretty Tom;
These are all Mr. Smith's children, every one,
Besides two still-born infants,
A daughter and a son.

After walking around the church and through the graveyard, we again got into our wagonette and proceeded on our way. The village

consists mainly of one long street, but, as we drove through, we perceived that it is of no ordinary kind. The houses are, for the most part, substantially built of stone. Many of them are good specimens of Elizabethan and Jacobean style. The market-house, standing in the middle of the street, is deserving of close study, and scarcely less interesting are the almost worn-out dairy-rests. Among the inns, ancient and quaint enough to satisfy such as know in the good old sense how to take their ease therein, are the "Old Eight Bells,"—the number of bells in the church tower,—"The Live and Let Live," and "The Rose and Crown." In bygone days "Ye antient towne of Chippyng Campedene" was a leading mart for Cotswold sheep and wool, as is shown by the fact that one wool merchant became Lord of Campden and built the church, and other merchants lie buried within the consecrated walls. Here in the autumn of 1651, after the battle of Worcester, the fugitive Prince Charles, one fair day, had a quarrel with a farmer and narrowly escaped detection. The Puritans and the Royalists sought either to gain or retain possession of the town, and, in a letter written in 1644 by a royalist officer, among other things is the curious line: "We are taking great paines with spades, shovels and mattocks, planting the Gospel." Good soul, it would take more than his and his comrades' pains to plant the Gospel among a class of people who argued that because St. Paul wrote for a *cloak*, bishops in those early days wore no lawn sleeves! Now a beautiful and mellow old age has fallen upon the place, with all its gentle loveliness, and it rests in a happy and an enviable peace.

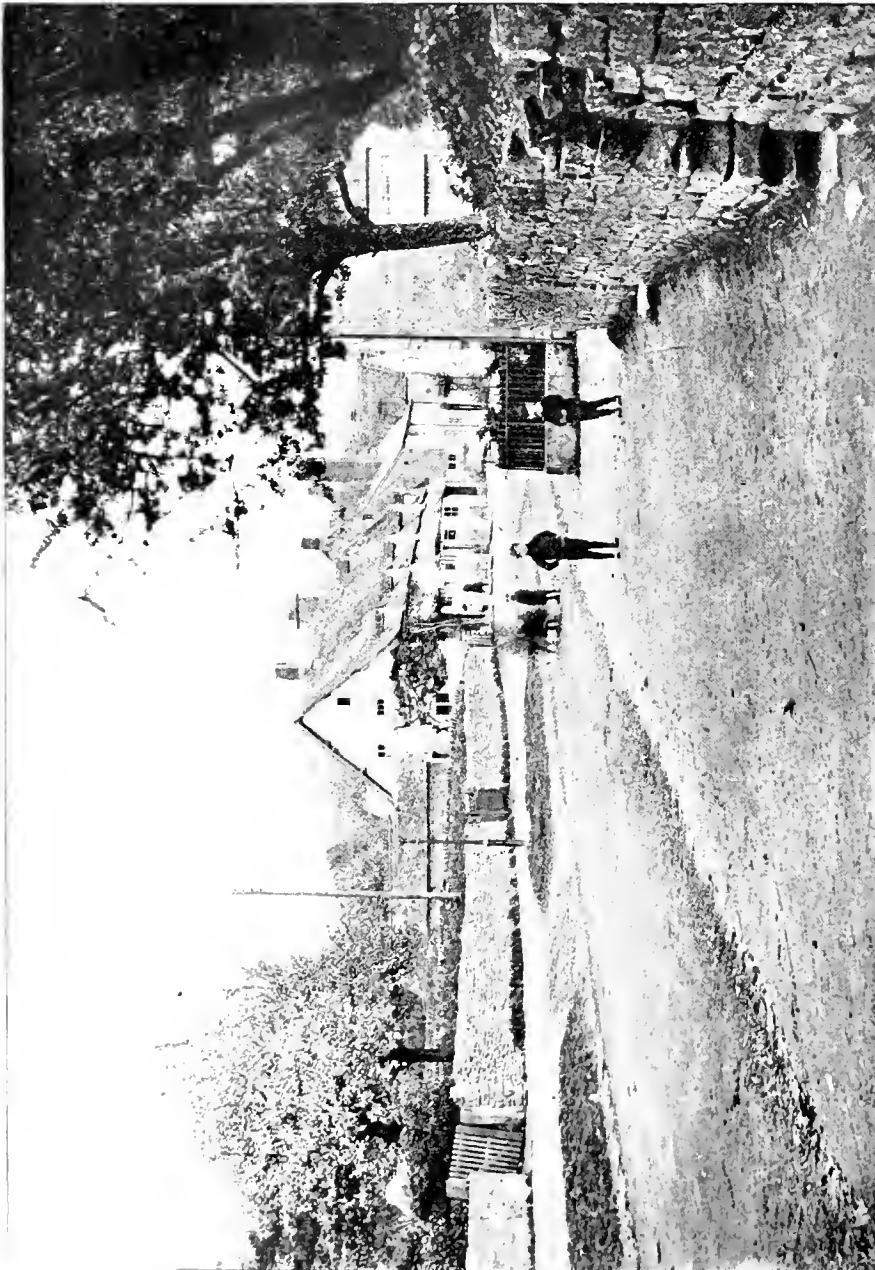
There is contentment hereabouts, I do not question. The meek shall inherit the earth—and old Tyndale gave some advice on this subject, which in these villages was followed somewhat in his day, and for aught I know the like practice is not now unknown. "If the gentlemen," he says, "that dwell about thee be tyrants, be ready to help to fetch home their wood, to plough their land, to bring in their harvest, and so forth; and let thy wife visit my lady now and then with a couple of fat hens, or a fat capon, and such like, and then thou shalt possess all the remnant in rest." And, as though this counsel was of prime importance, he repeats it in slightly different form: "Give the bailiff or like officer now a capon, now a pig, now a goose, and so to thy landlord likewise; or, if thou have a great farm, now a lamb, now a calf; and let thy wife visit thy landlady three or four times in the year with spiced cakes, and apples, pears, cherries, and such like. And be thou ready with thine oxen or horses, three or four, or half a dozen days in the year, to fetch home their wood, or to plough their

land: yea, and if thou have a good horse, let them have him good cheap, or take a worse for him; and they shall be thy shield and defend thee." And the astute reformer adds: "Thereto thou mayest with wisdom get of them that which shall recompense all that thou doest to them." I am not sure that any modern scholar, writing an exposition of the Gospels, would incorporate in his notes such an admonition as this; but he might go farther away from human nature and do worse. Were I ever to write a commentary on the Sacred Scriptures—and God forbid that I should add to the blocks of books which now perplex the little-minded—I believe I should quote this passage from Tyndale's Exposition of St. Matthew, so that I might, if possible, vex the soul of the democrat and leveller. My forefathers gave ducks to the lords of whom they rented their lands—with profit, I assure you; and Parson Ball, hundreds of years since, as you may find out, if you choose to read the pleasant story of the Life and Death of Jack Straw, used to sing:

But merrily with the world it went,
When men ate berries of the hawthorn-tree.

But Tyndale was done to death; by whom it matters nothing now. There are lots of people in the world to-day, who would burn up any man who should teach such lessons as the above, and who would destroy without compunction the quiet life of this village and the kindly relations which exist therein between the parson and his flock, and between the folk of the great house and the people of the cottage. Before long the smock-frocks of the old men and the scarlet cloaks of the old women will be seen no more, and, unless better times come in, instead of the tenant giving his landlord a capon or a fat hen, he will steal from his landlord the bread which the landlord should have for himself and family. Nevertheless, let us say that in this quiet, old-fashioned town there is contentment.

In the course of the next four miles after leaving Campden, as we ascend the high lands, the hedges disappear and stone walls take their place. The higher we go, the more extensive and picturesque the landscape in our rear. Far away, Brailes Hill bounds in the verdant, varied and lovely country. But when we reach the highest point of the Cotswolds hereabouts—Broadway Beacon—a thousand and fifty feet above the sea, we behold stretched out before us a panorama such as nowhere else has greeted us, and such as England, rich as that country is in beautiful scenery, nowhere else excels. In 1798 was built on this elevated point, a tower from whose battlemented heights the view is considerably en-



hanced. Though the tower itself is modern, it is a fair imitation of an ancient castellated keep—hectagonal, with three turrets. It is guarded by an aged dame, whose bright-faced little granddaughter accompanies visitors up the spiral staircase and points out to them, in the valley below, villages and other places of interest. And enough there is to show on clear days such as this, when only the faintest haze rests upon even the far-away mountains of Wales. There, in the wide plain, are to be seen the three spires of Coventry and the chimneys of Warwick; still farther off is the Shropshire Wrekin. Nearer at hand lies Bredon Hill, lovely foreground to the even lovelier Malvern. And there, at our feet, lies the fertile vale of Evesham—a very garden of the Lord, that no Italian plain, no, nor for that matter, no land bounded by the Euphrates and the Tigris, by Hiddekel or Pison, can be more beautiful, more rich in field and woodland, in verdant knoll and leaf-embowered streamlet, in peaceful village, noble mansion and tree-nestled farm. To those who love Nature, God, once in a while, vouchsafes a picture of supremest power and grace. He has done so to us at this time. A perfect day, and a mingling of richest, softest colors, romance, vision, joy—satisfying and heart-stirring.

The girl just referred to had an eye for the unsurpassed loveliness around. She enthusiastically indicated its brightest spots; but she added, knowingly and pathetically, “The tower is awfully cold and lonely in the winter-time.” We can well imagine the days when the wind sweeps along the bare hillside and the rain beats against the lattice. Then comes Melancholy; and in the dismal gloom, far from sight and sound of cheerful company, one feels that life has some depths one cares not even to look into.

When we had exhausted the time at our disposal, reluctantly enough we descended the stairs, wished our little guide good-bye, and proceeded in our carriage to the highway. On the hill-top we passed the ancient and solitary inn called the “Fish,” and began the steep and dangerous descent towards Broadway. By the way, unless the keeper of the “Fish” paints his sign, before long nobody will be able to tell whether he intends to display a tunny or an elephant. At present the figure looks very like a pilchard smitten with erysipelas. Two men, standing by the door as we drove on, appeared sadly in need of a box of Pear’s soap and a case of Redditch needles.

In a few minutes we entered Broadway. I had never been here before, and high as were my expectations, yet as we drove down that quaint and venerable street—the broad way—my heart fluttered with joy. It is

hard to describe that which seizes the imagination and enlivens and quickens thoughts. The houses are mostly of stone, some of them being over two hundred, and a few over three hundred years old. There are high-pitched gables, curious finials, mullioned windows, leaded casements with tiny panes, mighty chimney-stacks, and strangely-fashioned doorways. In front of the brown-hued dwellings are gardens in which appear yew trees shaped in odd devices, and over the low stone walls the hollyhock displays its gaudy colors, or the woodbine spreads its fragrant bloom. Between these walls and the roadway is a broad and an irregular stretch of grass, making a pleasing foreground. On this grass, here and there, a few children were playing and two or three artists were making sketches. Under a wall, beyond which a mighty rosebush was in flower, a cow was quietly chewing the cud. We move leisurely along lest we should disturb the peace, or by any chance break a cobweb which some spider should have cast across the road.

Now there is in the village of Broadway an hostelry of some four hundred years' standing, where, over a mug of nut-brown and with a church-warden pipe—if you choose to smoke—one can easily transplant one's self from the prosaic and comfortable present into the stirring commonwealth times, or even into the brilliant days when bluff Harry reigned; nay, for the matter of that, with scarcely greater effort, into earlier ages still. The very look of the place is to the lover of history an inspiration; a peep through the doorway is sufficient to make one forget the warm sunshine and such commonplace things as grand hotels and railways, and to see at once red-faced yeomen, verderers and archers, merry maidens and sighing swains, trooping along the low-ceiled passageway in the picturesque costumes of the days that shall never come again, and creating a babble of noise that mine host, jolly and rotund, finds it impossible to quell. In the days when Edward the Sixth was king, the house was known as the White Hart Inn—pleasant suggestion of the times when in the woodlands and parks not so far away, the huntsman sped the arrow after the fleeting buck or doe; within the present century the property fell into new hands, and the name was changed to the "Lygon Arms," for which bit of sacrilege all good Christians should pray that repentance may be vouchsafed the perpetrators. Here, one Saturday in the March of 1645, came Charles I; and here, one night just before the battle of Worcester, in the September of 1651, slept Oliver Cromwell. The room occupied by the latter worthy is still indicated—a delightful old chamber with some bits of former ornamentation and tokens of present comfort. No doubt other

celebrities have honored these walls with their presence, and, beyond peradventure, no matter what his rank or station in life may be, he who cannot eat his beef and drink his ale with all felicity within these dear old rooms and under these timbered ceilings, ought forthwith to be consigned to the limbo of vegetarians and total abstainers—greater misery than which it would be hard to find for mortal man. And here in the one main thoroughfare of Broadway stands, as I repeat it has stood for the last four or five hundred years, the quaint old inn. I look at the dripstones over its windows, at the gables with the little diamond-paned casements, at the ivy creeping over the grey stone walls, at the chimney-stacks, at the sign post, where swing the arms of the people who loved themselves better than they honored the past, at the front door over which projects a lamp, and I know that here the heart will be touched by associations of which a king might be glad. This impression is deepened as we enter the cool and pleasant hallway. The shade and flag flooring are refreshing after this warm drive. Some one asked Khoja, "What musical instrument do you like best?" And he made answer, "I am very fond of the music of plates and sancepans." At my behest the courteous and gentle hostess promised to have dinner ready in a little while; a good, plain dinner of roast mutton, green peas and new potatoes, served up in a style that old John Travers, who lived here in the reign of Philip and Mary, would have delighted in—barring the wooden trenchers, the leathern ale-jacks, and a few other trifles of like kind.

The horse takes to his oats and we start off for a stroll through the village, intending to be back at the Lygon Arms for our dinner, as the old saying hath it, in pudding time—an allusion, as my intelligent reader quickly apprehends, to the ancient and economical custom at dinner of having pudding first; and therefore meaning that we shall have our legs under the mahogany when the heat from the dishes is fiercest and most savory. We turn in the direction of the Church of St. Eadburga, which church, with a commendable desire for the health of the people of Broadway, the Abbots of Pershore, some six hundred years since, built a little over a mile from the town. In those days the people on their way to Divine service had opportunity to see the beauties of nature and to hear the small birds sing, and some good soul, laden with the blessings of this life, had a chance to further his joy in the next world and to help his neighbors in this, by laying a convenient and pleasant footpath from the village to the sanctuary. The footpath once made would be kept in repair, for the clergy then held it to be a religious duty and an act of mercy

for the people to mend their ways. This church is now disused, and about half a century since a new edifice was opened on a spot more accessible to the inhabitants, as the guide books put it ; a wise thing, perhaps, for people do not care in these days to expend much effort in serving God, and dissenting tabernacles are painfully convenient. The street of Broadway is about three-quarters of a mile long, and in an old manuscript it is spoken of as "the broad and high way from the shepherd cottages on the mounted wolds down to the most fruitful vale of Evesham." The manor is as old as the days of the Mercian kings, and from the tenth century to the sixteenth century it belonged to the good fathers of Pershore. In those days of clerical ownership Broadway flourished. Indeed, till the railway came into the land, the place was a "bustling thoroughfare." The horn of the post-boy awakened the echoes, and the coach filled with passengers from far-off "Lunnon," and drawn by four sturdy and well-rubbed horses, rumbled and rattled twice a week along the road. Then sprightly Molly, first chambermaid at the White Hart, and, for sweet, laughing eyes and pouting lips and slender waist, by far the prettiest of all the village girls, got from Roger, the coachman, a picture of good Queen Charlotte and another of a sailor, with one arm around a fat woman and the other waving a cocked hat, and out of his mouth a bit of tape, on which were the words he was supposed to be uttering : "Britannia and Betsy forever." These pictures Roger brought all the way down in his great-coat pocket, and he gave them to Molly behind the pantry door, with just the nicest squeeze and kiss that ever stalwart youth offered to blushing maiden. Perhaps he loved Molly best of all the girls he knew along the road ; and she, simple-hearted—for she had never in all her life seen the other side of the hill—thought how nice he looked in his high boots, and wondered if she should ever have her hair done up in a tower of glory like the Queen's. Those were merry times ; but now Roger and Molly are both dead, and the stage-coach is gone, and the post-boy's horn is no more heard, and the place is a deserted village. Perhaps in the present quiet, sleepy life, many would not see anything to be thankful for ; but I for one love to think that earth has yet a few spots where the apple-blossoms are free from the soot of factory chimneys and the children can look for elves under the dock-leaves. Certainly in this warm noontide the street is still enough. A wheelbarrow stands by the wayside, but the man to whom it belongs is sitting in the doorway of the inn near the green, leisurely quaffing a mug of—well, small beer, perhaps. We turn aside to see the grange in which once the abbots of Pershore and other members of their fraternity used

to pass part of the summer months. Broadway was even then a health-restoring place. This house is supposed, and fairly enough, to have been built early in the thirteenth century, and as it is in fair preservation it affords an example of the country home of a well-to-do ecclesiastic of the period. Since the monks went out the building has been so arranged as to serve for cottages, but pleasant memories freely flow when we enter the cellar, and later on the hall and the oratory. There are now neither wine butts in the chamber on the one side of the hall nor prayer-stalls in the chamber on the other; the folk who have lived there of late have nothing to do with malmsy or with beads. But what glorious times when my lord abbot held his court there! I do not believe that the rich and the poor, the great and the small, ever loved one another as they did then. Of course they quarrelled—even brothers do that; and sometimes fight, too, but the relationship remains. There were disputes to settle between the steward and the tenants: this man failed in the number of days he was bound to plough the abbot's land, and this man came short of the geese he should have furnished against last Michaelmas; and therefore their holdings are in danger. But my lord is merciful—as sons of the earth, commonly called temporal lords, are not—and he forgives the debt, at the same time reminding those standing by of a certain parable bearing on the subject. And he gathers together his friends and his neighbors, his servants and his villains, and a right merry afternoon and evening they have beneath this old timbered roof. I would give much could I but go back in time and behold the merry souls: all dead and gone now, but none the worse, I trow, for what they did in the ancient hall. Perhaps the men then knew as well as do men now, how to cut large thongs out of other folks' leather; but we should forget the ill and remember only the good, and such I shall do as I picture to myself the portly churchman and the worthy yeoman of the Kite's Nest knocking their blackjacks together and roaring merrily over some exploit of grave Father Ambrose, the abbot's chaplain,—a man, by the way, who, while he never laughed himself, tickled most mercilessly the cockles of his neighbor's heart. But we must get back to Chapel Street.

The walk along the road to the old church was not simply pleasant, it was charming. I wish I could have such a saunter every Sunday morning; certainly I should afterwards sing *Venite* and *Benedicite* more heartily. The hedges were thick and shady, and towards the end of our journey the trees were more frequent. There is a fine avenue near the churchyard gate. Three or four steps to the top of the wall and then

down into God's acre. The wind from the valley lightly swayed the tree boughs ; the sunbeams played hide and seek in the tall grass and among the gravestones. A dragon-fly, splendid of wing, darted across our path and once a toad hopped from under the chancel wall ; but there was nothing else of life—not even a sheep. We were alone with the dead. We wander hither and thither, striving to decipher the inscriptions on some of the time-darkened and displaced monuments. I did not see such a legend as Nicholas Breton proposed for his " Merry Honest Fellow ":

Here lies a man, like hives that have no honey—
An honest creature, but he had no money.

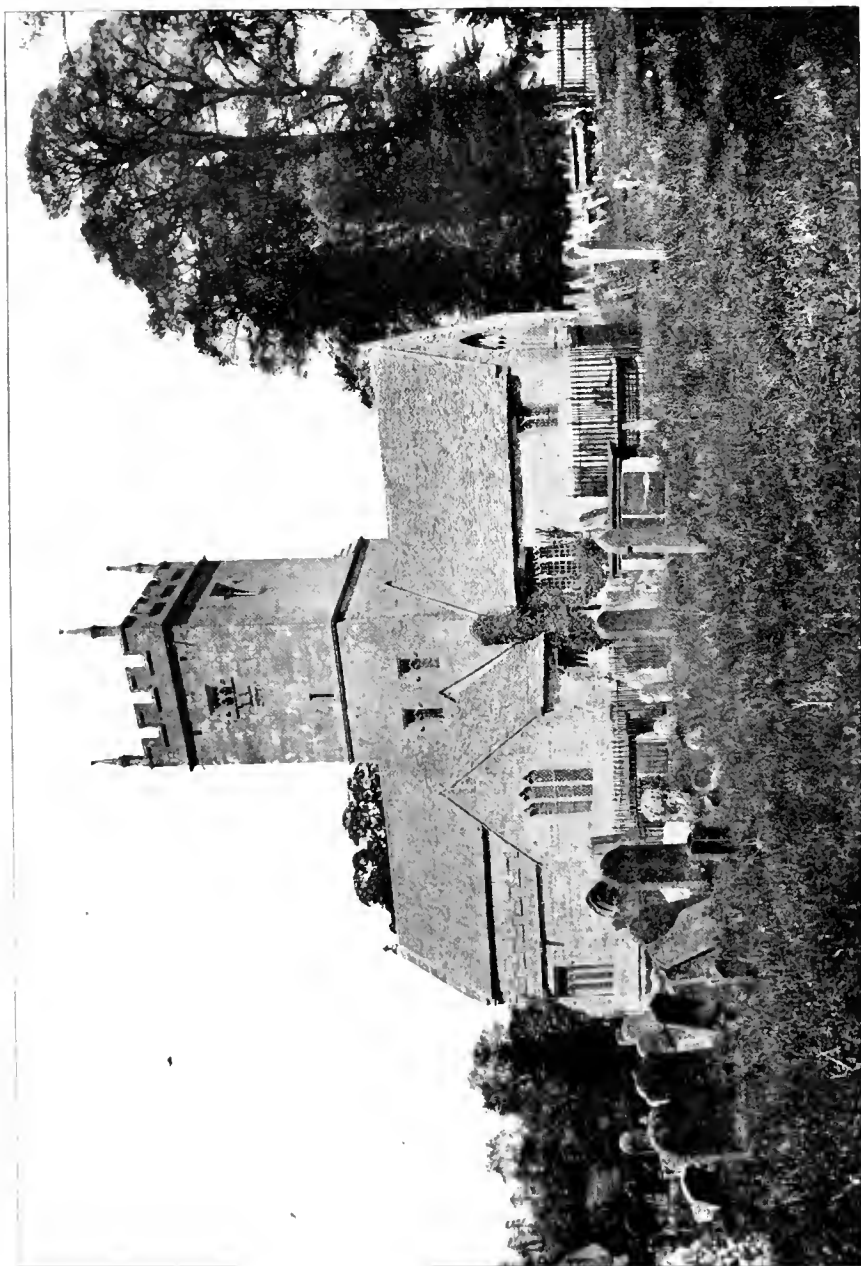
But from a stone erected to the memory of a matron who died June 24, 1784, at the age of eighty, I read the following lines:

Reader, here lies a Woman of such are left too few
The Poor One's friend and not the richest's foe
The virtuous wife and tender mother too
Whose deeds were ever faithful good & true
Beneath this stone lies slumbering in the dust
Go live like her that when Death
Your work may

The lower part of the stone was too far under ground for me to make out the rest ; but my reader suffers no serious loss. I give this because it is the best bit of obituary poetry I could find in the churchyard, and therefore furnishes a proof that the Broadway people are more given to practical things—to sheep and apples, and to good, fat farmlands, for which I heartily love them.

I know not whether the Saint after whom the church is named was she who is remembered as second of the abbesses of St. Peter's, Gloucester, and who died in A. D. 735, or some other of the several Eadburgas of ancient fame ; but the church, cruciform, is a fair specimen of the thirteenth century work. It is strongly built and looks as though it would last for many a long year yet. The chancel appears to be as long, though not quite as high, as the nave. The square, plain tower, very well proportioned, rises from the middle of the building, and the nave has on either side a small aisle, which aisles with the tower alone are battlemented, the other roofs being highly pitched. We looked through one of the windows into the building—bare and dusty ; but it is to be hoped that some day evensong at least may again be heard therein.

One always feels more or less inclined to moralize in an old church-



yard. The temptation, as we rest for a few minutes under the trees, comes upon me, even though I keep steadily in mind that book of Hervey which once delighted and enlivened so many ancient ladies of my acquaintance—"Meditations among the Tombs." I used to read it myself and take a pleasure in its doleful lines, and its suggestions of musty, damp charnel-houses. Drelincourt was another precious tome that pleased the old folks; but somehow or other, as I get nearer the time when over me some one will say the "Forasmuch," as I have said it over many and many a silent brother or sister, I do not care to read such things. Perhaps I do not think of them as often as I did when passing through the sentimental years of youth; certainly I do not preach such tender and tearful sermons as I did when but a young priest. Is it that then I did not hesitate so much as I do now to touch the heart's red sores? Experience in the pastoral office has not made me more bold in the face of great grief. There was a time when I could speak to one afflicted; now I have to keep silent. And these Christian people who lie around me once came down the road to church. I see them as they wander along in twos and threes—some gay as the blossom on the hedge or the blackbird in the orchard, and others sober and thoughtful. Homely they may have been, but sorrow was to them as deep as it is to those of higher culture; even the dandelion bleeds when you break its stalk, and a tree that has all its days grown amongst other trees soon dies when its fellows are cut down and it is left to itself. Each man had his own life, little, perhaps, to the world, but to him very great; and in that life there was much mingling of good and bad, of joy and sorrow, of hope and doubt, and of all the elements that go to make humanity either happy or sad. It is so now. And Sunday after Sunday the bells rang the villagers to the sanctuary, and Sunday after Sunday they turned their steps hitherward. The day came to each one when he went not back again.

There is a delight past description in turning over the leaves of an old parish register and in deciphering the entries therein. This pleasure will not be mine at this time. But long ago I picked up a copy of Mr. John Noake's "Rambler in Worcestershire"—a scarce, but most delightful book, brimful of interest, written forty years since—and in the pages of that worthy antiquary are given some extracts, curious enough to the curiously inclined. Thus we discover that in the Broadway register, which begins with the year 1539, some scribe perpetuated his dislike for Henry VIII by making such entries as the following: "These vacancies were occasioned by the small and insignificant maintenance and vicarage afforded, great part

of the parish being abbey lands, which, together with the tithes, were disposed of blindly, without regard to the credit and support of religion, by that lustful beast, King Henry VIII, who quarrelling with——— y^e Pope, that he was not by that man of sin allowed in his sinfull change of wives, destroyed the religious houses, gave way y^e lands to such creatures as flattered him in his robberies, lewdness, and murders: *et nunc inferno docet exemplo miserabili quam imp—sit sacro Dei vocare.*" After much similar abuse, the writer, bent on making history, proceeds: "The improved rents of abbeys amounted to £1,500,000 per annum, yet no provision was made for preaching or praying in most of the parishes in the kingdom. Just was God's judgment against Cromwell, y^e promoter of y^e suppression of religious houses—that he was sacrificed to y^e caprice of a lascivious woman—y^e Lady Howard. This notable reformer, who under that pretence, had seized y^e revenues of y^e church, when he came to die, ownd he had been seduced, and died a zealous Papist. He was attainted of treason and heresie without being heard in his defence—a proceeding y^e he himself had too much encouraged. Righteous art thou, O Lord, in all thy ways, and just are thy judgments."

Possibly the parson who penned these plain and vigorous lines and thereby gave vent to his indignation lies buried somewhere in this church-yard. He wrote much more in a like strain, but this will do for an illustration, though I cannot help thinking how red in the face and short-breathed he became as he depicted the fate of poor Hal. People felt strongly in the olden time, but now even Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth lie side by side in Westminster Abbey. The big folios in which the dismal stories and ponderous arguments were written rest in the libraries covered with dust; once they were read, and the diligent housewife put the newly-starched bands between the leaves. And yet there was a humour in those ancient men both refreshing and helpful. Tyndale caught his opponents on the hip when he declared that the truths of Protestantism needed no miracles to support them. You understand that better when you think of Loretto. You will understand, too, more of the disposition of the English villagers two centuries since, when you are told that the churchwarden of a small town, not so many miles herefrom, Dinton by name, proclaimed in the church register that he was the best boxer in the parish, with the exception of the rector's son.

We must get back to the Lygon Arms. Yonder pigeons remind me that in the Middle Ages dovecotes were provided in the parish churches of England. On Whitsunday the rattling of the wings was heard from over-

head in the clerestory and among the arches. This did not teach docility and gentleness, for in the afternoon of that day, besides dancing, bowling and shooting at the butts, the men indulged in cudgel-play and wrestling, and thus, not infrequently, provided work for the leech and cause of tears for the women. Rough and merry were the folk of those days, and I am not sure that even the fresh rushes and grass strewn on the church floor were long left unmatted with blood. And there was barley-break, of which Lamont sings in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*; perhaps also nine men's morris and prisoners' base, with a bear-baiting once in a while. The girls, too, had their Whitsun-games—no, not to catch the pigeons! I fancy the birds were rarely molested. But at this time, in some parishes, the maids of the village, having their thumbs tied behind them, ran after, and endeavoured to catch with their mouths, a live fat lamb. She who succeeded was styled the Lady of the Lamb, and when afterwards the roast was ready and the people, boisterous and hungry, sat down to eat it, she presided over the feast. Sometimes instead of a lamb, the object of the chase was a pig, or, to use the Mahometan euphemism for the latter animal, a black deer. Rather a gay way of spending one of the highest of Church-days, you will say; but after all not worse than the modern custom of reading newspapers and novels on a Sunday. By this time our mutton must be well-nigh done.

Bishops and coachmen still wear breeches and gaiters; but of the days when all men appeared in that becoming costume—and it is interesting to observe how since Queen Elizabeth's time the nether garments have gradually worked down the leg till they now touch the heel—I never think without recalling a habit of Archbishop Whately. When that dignitary found a hole in his archiepiscopal stocking he used to stick a bit of black plaister on his leg where the hole would appear. I notice, pegged on a clothes' line, a pair of these things. Men used to wear them in country places when I was a boy; but I had supposed that in these degenerate days none used them save those who handle clergymen and horses. This, perhaps, is well, for, given a priest or a horse with bad habits, such as obstinacy or viciousness, exceptional gifts are needed for those who have to deal with such; and exceptional men should be distinguished. Thirty years last February an unpopular vicar left Broadway. What he had done does not matter much; but when he departed there was a tremendous explosion of public feeling. It is hard to think of excitement in a village where a pair of shorts may be seen airing on a clothes' line in the front garden, but strange things do happen; and one who saw the anger

of the villagers that day, and heard their cries of derision and their shouts of delight as the carriage bearing the obnoxious parson drove away, said he could only liken the scene to Macaulay's description of the scorn exhibited upon the appearance of Sextus Tarquinius:

"A yell that rent the firmament
From all the town arose ;—
From the housetops was no woman
But spat towards him and hissed,
No child but screamed out curses
And shook its little fist."

Rather a rude farewell! But since men have taken to trousers they have been ever so much gentler. I remember a parish—perhaps it was in Canada—where for twelve years the people had been trying to get rid of a clergyman they did not like. They spoke alternately in hints and in plain words, but the parson went not. At last an appointment elsewhere was offered him, and his parishioners eagerly arranged to bid him God-speed. So pleased were they that they determined to give him an address and a present; and for this purpose a large meeting was held. The people were very kind and very polite. They shook hands with him more warmly than they had done for years. There were no such ebullitions of feeling as these Broadway folk displayed. But when the churchwarden arose to read the address, he expressed himself so sorry that their beloved rector was about to leave them, and from the address recited passages in which were set forth the profoundest gratitude for all that he had done for them and the most unqualified assurance that the poor sheep in the wilderness would find none so good as he to care for them; and everybody realized how gentle a thing religion is, and what an influence trousers have had on men. Many of the people wept as the churchwarden spoke. The best of preachers and of pastors was about to leave them. It was a touching sight—pocket handkerchiefs and red eyes. But how much better than the Broadway plan! Only to be sure, when the clergyman saw the sorrow his departure was causing, and thought of the ruin that his withdrawal would bring upon these people, he forgot the long years of opposition, and with tremulous voice said: "Brethren, I didn't know you loved me like this! I'll never leave you! No; I'll never leave you!" And he stayed.

The dinner is excellent; so are our appetites. England produces wonderful mutton, and quite as wonderful waiters. We have a man in black and a maid largely in white, to serve the table. They are as sober

and as silent as though they were ministering to the dead. Not a smile : not even a question. They know what we want before we are sure of it ourselves. We eat and for a while say nothing. Said M. Merrygreek to a comrade—who he was Nicholas Udall knows better than I—“ Ten men can scarce match you with a spoon in a pie.” We feel that we are likewise matchless just now. But time mends most things and by and by come nuts and port. The bottle is fresh from dust and cobwebs and brings up the lines beginning :

Troll the bowl and drink to me, and troll the bowl again.

And the cloth is drawn and the servitors are gone. Were they not dumb waiters? We can spend half an hour more : then home.

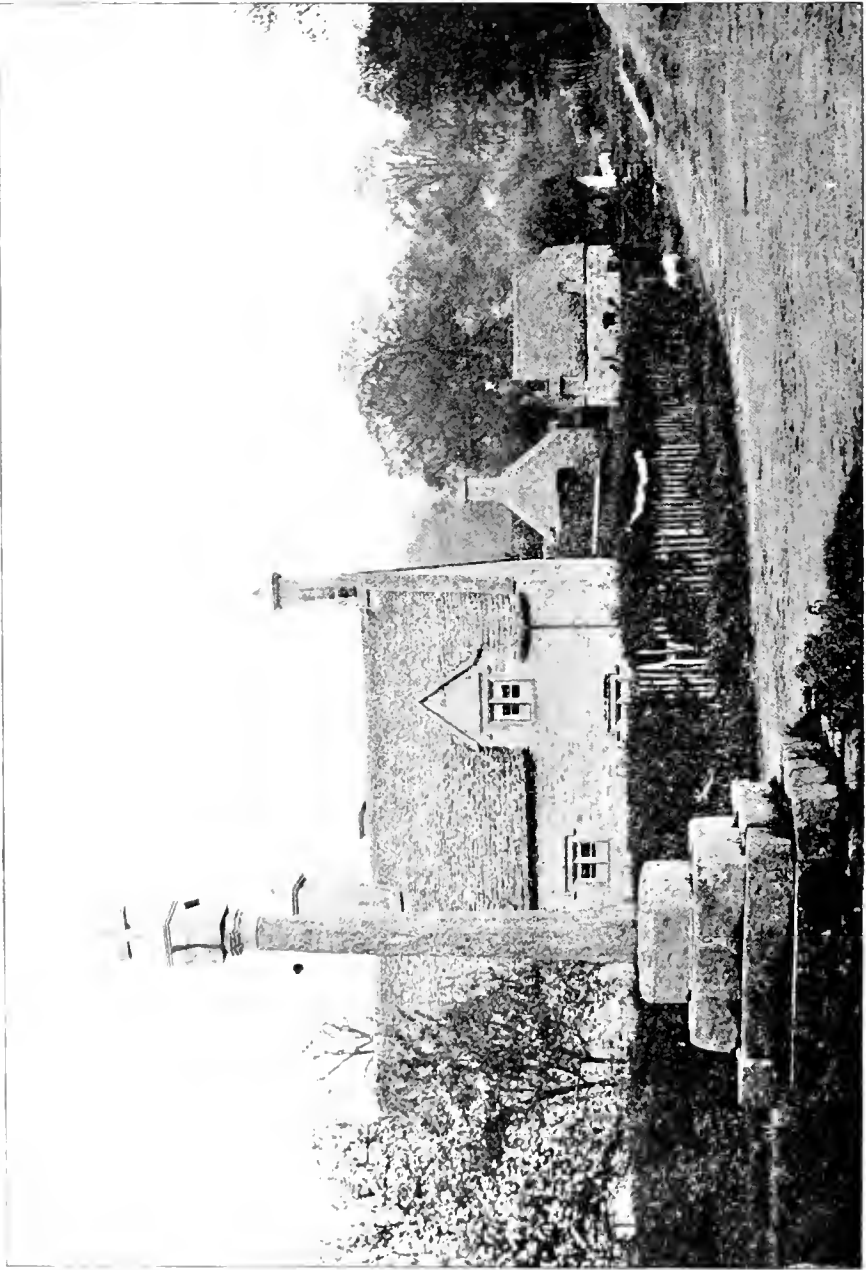
Happily we have the room to ourselves. When an Englishman is ill-bred he has not his equal in Christendom, and I have been at country inns, and at city inns too, where I have been made to feel the offensiveness of such. At Oxford, not so many days since, a stout, vulgar and well-dressed clown came into the dining-room where I and my friends were peacefully interested in our beef and potatoes, and, sitting down at a table close by, began to stare us out of countenance. Another of the same fellowship joined him and the two found much merriment in watching us. Of course our dinner was spoiled. To-day we have every felicity. The lines have fallen upon us in pleasant places : whereof we are glad and feel well-disposed to everybody. There is nothing like the comfort and the goodwill one has after dinner. I do not wonder that Lord Mayors, members of parliament and all folks who crack filberts and sip sherry, are such kind-hearted beings. The cellar and the larder do much for charity ; and I have sometimes thought that cooks, even more than clergymen, are responsible for the falling off in benevolent subscriptions which sometimes happens. At any rate there is something in a man who can eat heartily. I have a friend, a bishop, whose appetite is fairly good. On his first visitation to a rural part of his diocese he was entertained at dinner by a churchwarden who was a farmer, plain and plump. Among the dishes was one of boiled fowl, and they who know what American housewives can do with chickens need not be reminded of the savouriness of such a course. The bishop was hungry. He ate fowl once and twice. Nor did he refuse a third serving. The farmer was delighted. His eyes sparkled and at last he exclaimed : “ O Bishop, we have much to be thankful for ! Now we have a bishop who can eat. Our last bishop would never take anything but a cup of tea and a little dry toast—a good man, but he couldn't eat ;

and all the women's preparations were lost." My friend has turned out well—if I may venture to pass an opinion on a prelate. No man is any the worse for being able to enjoy a good dinner.

The landlady takes us over the house. We see the great hall where once in a while banquets and balls occur ; also the comfortable drawing-room, and the chamber which once received royalty. The view from the stage on the roof is lovely, and the way up winding stairs and by old disused nooks, some under the rafters, has about it much interest. Then in the little waiting-room, at the request of our genial hostess, we make an entry in the Visitors' Book, in which we express ourselves as having greatly enjoyed our entertainment at Broadway, and at the Lygon Arms in particular.

Before we leave the place we go to a shop on the opposite side of the street, where are sold odds and ends, old and curious. It is worth while looking at the furniture and household articles which people of past generations used. Candlesticks and snuffers, cups and jugs, blackjacks and bootjacks, clocks, chairs, vases and umbrellas ; and above all, a flint, steel and tinder-box. These were common in my boyhood days and many a time I have made a light in this way. Pleasant it must have been on a wet wintry morning to find the fire out and the tinder damp. The prudent woman, however, put the box under her pillow. Now we have matches, and never think of thanking God for them.

Our journey back was by another and perhaps a prettier way than that by which we came. We passed through villages which seem never to have known of the world beyond the Cotswolds, and never to have heard either the march of time or the voice of change. Here and there the road was lined with trees and over the hedges we saw now a field yellow and thick with corn, now a meadow where side by side, busy getting their living, were sheep, crows, geese and horses, and now a copse from beside which peeped church spire or cottage roof. In some of the villages hereabouts still remain the stone crosses by the wayside whereat in days long since gone by the traveller said his prayers and the preacher gathered the peasants for a sermon. The Puritan does not appear to have been so fierce in this obscure region as he was in other parts of England ; hence survive, not only these crosses—a fine specimen of which we passed on our left—but also in the churches other things against which the destroyers of England's peace sternly set their faces. Had I to choose a spot of earth where I might speedily gather upon myself the moss of restfulness and oblivion, I should hesitate between quiet and pretty Willersey and the



equally reposeful and antique-looking Weston-sub-Edge. The latter village is so called to distinguish it from Aston-sub-Edge, which lies a little beyond on the other side of the hill. This Aston is in the Hundred Rolls called *Ēston*, and the two villages, one lying on the west side and the other on the east side of the hill, under the edge or brow, no doubt obtained their names from their respective topographical position. They are probably of Saxon origin. The hill lying between them is that of Dover's, so called after that attorney by whose efforts in the reign of King James the First the once famous Cotswold and Olympic games were instituted or restored. From this rather abrupt and jutting break in the Cotswold, may be had a glorious view, extensive and varied, and some say the finest in all Gloucestershire. I do not like it so much as the one from Broadway Tower; but landscapes, like pictures, depend for their appreciation much upon associations and tastes.

The games, which were held on the Thursday and Friday of Whitsun-week, consisted of "cudgel-playing, wrestling, the quintain, leaping, pitching the bar and hammer, handling the pike, playing at balloon or handball, leaping over each other, walking on the hands, a country dance of virgins, men hunting the hare (which, by Dover's orders, was not to be killed), and horse-racing on a course some miles long." They were very popular, being frequented not only by the people of the neighborhood, but by visitors from distances of sixty miles. Prizes were given and hundreds of gentlemen for a year after each contest wore "Dover's yellow favours"—perhaps, not only because the games developed and recognized athletic prowess, but also because they were a protest against the rising Puritanical prejudices. The inventor and director of the games—who is spoken of by his contemporaries as a kindly good-natured man, and whose appearance on a white horse and clad in hat, feathers and ruff and a suit of the king's clothes, given him by a gentleman of the bed-chamber as a mark of appreciation, made him the delight of the country side,—himself once wrote "A Congratulatory Poem" to his friends, in which he defends his "innocent pastime" against the Puritan charge of being "a wicked, horrid sin." Ben Jonson has some verses laudatory of his "jovial good friend Mr. Robert Dover on his great instauration of his hunting and dancing at Cotswold;" and in the "Merry Wives" appears a reference—first in the folio of 1623—to coursing on Cotswold. Good Master Slender inquires of Master Page, "How does your fallow greyhound, sir? I heard say he was outrun on Cotsall." The word is still pronounced "Cotsold"; the sheep cotes, once numerous here, giving their name to the wold. These

hills were famous for their flocks, and so in the first of all English comedies, "Ralph Roister Doister," written by Nicholas Udall in 1550, it is said of a timid individual who was to be urged to fight, "Then will he look as fierce as a Cotsold lion"; and everyone knows that before "a sheep's look full grim" the boldest heart may be forced to yield. The games came to an end about 1644, and though attempts have been made to revive them, yet no attempt has been successful.

Weston-sub-Edge has a large Early English Church and in the churchyard are to be found inscriptions which some may think worthy of remembrance. The following dates from 1781 and is on the grave of a girl of twenty-one years :

With patience I have run my race,
Kind death hath set me free,
Now I am in another place,
This world is not for me.
Prepared be to follow me,
When death doth for you call,
For in that day you must obey,
And give account for all.

This one belonging to the early part of the last century has now perished :

To the memory of Peter, butler to
Sir Wm. Keyte, Bart.
Though he had gone to kingdom come,
He had left the keys of the cellar behind him.

Here is another funny one :

I've lost the comfort of my life,
Death came and took away my wife,
And now I don't know what to do,
Lest death should come and take me too.

An incident happened not long since in this neighbourhood which illustrates both the sharpness of some natives and the simplicity of some constables. A man of the name of Smith acquired a taste for stripping clothes' lines and in several villages hereabouts much distress ensued, though for long no one suspected the real culprit. He had once lodged at Aston-sub-Edge with an old couple named Knight, in whose house also lived his sweetheart and her cousin, a daughter of the Knights. One January evening Friend Smith came to call at the cottage, but whether to see his sweetheart, or his aged landlady, or the "old chap," is uncertain. On the line in the back premises, however, had been placed to dry table-

cloths, blankets, shirts, handkerchiefs, towels and other like articles—this being Tuesday night ; a proof that these good people did their washing, after the custom of honest folk, early in the week. The tempting array was too much for Smith, and both he and the clothes disappeared. Two days later the clothes were found in a bundle under Smith's bed at his lodging-house in Bretforton, and that night, soon after Smith's arrival home, utterly unaware of the fate in store for him, two policemen started off with him for Campden. On the way they passed through Aston. There by dint of an ingenious plea as to his innocence and an amount of entreaty, he was permitted to see the old lady he had treated so badly, and the sweetheart he laid claim to who lived with her. It was late, and it was dark, and the inmates of the cottage had gone to bed. The sweetheart, apparently the lightest sleeper of them all, says my old friend, the *Exvesham Journal*, was prevailed upon to open the door, and the old man Knight also appeared on the scene. This was not sufficient for Mr. Smith. Not content with seeing the young woman he had kept company with for nearly two years and in whose smiles he had basked while lodging here from the end of August to Christmas Eve, the prisoner pleaded to be allowed "to speak to granny." Said the sergeant, "I don't think, Smith, you have any cause to go up there to disturb that poor old woman ; you can see her another time. You come quietly up to Campden, and then you can see her tomorrow." Smith, however, did not wait for formal permission, but proceeded in rather hasty fashion upstairs, and breaking in upon the old lady said, "Well, granny, how is it to be ; do you mean to press the case?" "I don't know, William," said the poor old woman ; "why did you do it?" She had not thought it lay in him to perform such a mean action. While this conversation was going on, one constable was on the stairs asking for a light and the other constable was down in the kitchen. Then was heard a "scrabble" and after that the breaking of glass, and the prisoner was gone through the window. As the police had locked the cottage door as soon as they were inside, they could not so readily follow the fugitive. After midnight a woman saw Smith going through the osier-beds ; but the constables went to Campden empty-handed.

This event created great excitement throughout the district and people began to think of Smith as a hero. Such things do not happen every day. There is always enough lawlessness in most men to make them feel comfortable at heart when the police are outwitted, especially when the wrong done against society is not in itself either great or cruel. The jump through the window was spoken of as a wonderful achievement. But

mine host of the Seagrave Arms expressed his opinion that the room was never left at all. His theory was that Smith with a stick broke the window and thus put the gentlemen in blue off the track. While they were in pursuit he quickly walked downstairs and out of the front door. Be this as it may, a few days later the prisoner was arrested at Chipping Norton and brought up for punishment. He pleaded guilty and was fined; and for many a long day this episode will be remembered—even when Mr. Gladstone and his Home Rule Bill are forgotten.

After a while we reach Mickleton, which may have been at one time, comparatively speaking, "a great town," though now it has little to boast of either in size or in noise. There is an old church with a fine spire, and here were born or lived several persons of celebrity. William Shenstone, the poet, used here to visit his friend, the Reverend Richard Graves, the son of a local antiquary and the author of that amusing and severe novel entitled "*The Spiritual Quixote, or the Summer's Rambles of Mr. Geoffrey Wildgoose, a Comic Romance.*" Perhaps some Wesleyan scholar can point out where the fun came in. This Richard Graves was an eccentric little man, a zealous churchman, sprightly in conversation, and maintaining to the verge of ninety remarkable health and vigour. In one of his letters Shenstone speaks of eating mutton at Mickleton with the squire, and of drinking tea at the vicarage with the Curate's daughter. The latter feat seems to have overpowered the poet's mind, for on leaving the vicarage he wandered about on the hills for several hours. Both he and Richard Graves admired this young lady, but Utrecia Smith—such was her name—died from an attack of smallpox at the age of thirty, and unmarried. Then to the memory of the "simple, pure and elegant girl," the one lover put up a sculptured urn and the other wrote some lines. Another native of Mickleton was Giles Widdowes, who when rector of St. Martin's, Oxford, in the reign of Charles I, wrote a defence of Bowing to the Altar, which called forth an answer from Prynne entitled "*Lame Giles, his haltings.*" But "the lawless, kneeless, schismatical Puritan," as Widdowes styled his kind, would have had an answer from an Oxford divine had not Archbishop Abbot interposed. The peace-loving prelate held that enough had been said concerning a matter "wherein Mr. Widdowes foolishly, and Mr. Prynne scurrilously, have already, to the scandal of the Church, exercised their pens." A nephew of Widdowes was rector of Woodstock in the time of the Civil Wars, and wrote that account of the "*Just Devil*" upon which Sir Walter Scott partly founded the plot of one of his romances. Besides these persons Mickleton can claim

another poet in Frances Elizabeth Steel-Graves, born here on the last day of the year 1845, and whose promise of talent was destroyed by an untimely death. At the age of seventeen she wrote "My Queen"; and truly the song has about it a right exquisite flavour. I read it for the first time by the wayside in the warm afternoon sun, and here it is:

Where and how shall I earliest meet her?
 What are the words she first will say?
 By which name shall I learn to greet her?
 I know not now—it will come some day!
 With the self-same sunlight shining upon her—
 Shining down on her ringlets' sheen;
 She is standing somewhere—she that I honour—
 She that I wait for—my Queen—my Queen!

Whether her hair be golden or raven,
 Whether her eyes be hazel or blue;
 I know not now, but 't will be engraven
 Some sweet day as my loveliest hue;
 Many a girl I have loved for a minute—
 Worshipped many a face I have seen;
 Ever and aye; there was something in it,
 Something that could not be hers—my Queen!

I will not dream of her tall and stately;
 She that I love may be fairly light;
 I will not say she must speak sedately,
 Whatever she does it will then be right.
 She may be humble or proud, my lady—
 Or that sweet calm that is just between—
 And whenever she comes she will find me ready
 To do her homage—my Queen—my Queen!

But she must be courteous, she must be holy;
 Pure in her spirit, this maiden I love.
 Whether her birth be noble or lowly,
 I care no more than the Spirit above.
 I will give my heart to my lady's keeping
 And ever her strength on mine shall lean;
 And the stars may fall, and the saints be weeping;
 Ere I cease to love her—my Queen—my Queen!

Nor does this exhaust the worthies of Mickleton. Among the owners of the manor was an Edward Fisher, who in his own day enjoyed some reputation as a historian, linguist and controversialist. He was a strong

opponent of the Puritans, and as he lived through the reign of Charles I he had plenty of opportunity for the display of his prowess. He wrote four or five books, some to justify the observation of Christmas and Good Friday, and others to show that the Lord's Day was not to be considered as the Sabbath. His loyalty to Church and King may have helped him into trouble; certainly he was obliged to flee the country on account of debt and he died poor. In their outspoken zeal men of those times forgot kindly manners: "Soft fire maketh sweet malt," as Tibet Talkapace saith.

In the Parish Registers there are copies of dispensations granted by the vicar about the year 1662 to a Mr. Wm. Widdowes—relative, no doubt, of "Lame Giles"—giving him permission, owing to his many and frequent diseases which "are notoriously known to y^e inhabitants of Mickleton," to eat flesh in Lent. A John Walford is in like manner relieved from a fish-diet. These dispensations were given according to "the statute in that case provided"; but in these days when a man finds that he requires beef at times when the church forbids its use, he takes the law into his own hands. In other words he obeys authority when and as he pleases. Not so did these men of old. They got certificates of their infirmities from their physician, and then to their "just desires" the parson "con-descended," as he puts it, to grant them license to continue their "usual and customary meats, dietts and drinkes."

As my reader has probably never seen such a license I here transcribe one for his edification:

"feeb 27, } *Whereas* Mr. John Walford of Mickleton in the County of Glouer,
1663 } is of so weake and infirme habit and constitution of body, that (in
ye iudgment of his learned and skilfull physitian) he may not
refraind eating of flesh the whole time of the Lent wtout a grand
debilitation of strength and impayring of his health, for wch.
case he craued license under mine hand (according to ye statute
in that behalfe p'iuded) for the eating of flesh, to whose iust and
necessary request I did accord, and granted him license on the
day & yeare above written. Hen: Hurst, Vic: of Mickleton."

There is a ghost-story anent some woods on the comb or hillside beyond Mickleton. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth a grant was made of the manor of Mickleton—which had hitherto belonged to the Abbey of Eynsham, and therefore was church land,—to a court favourite, who sold it to a descendant of that Grevil who built the church at Chipping Campden. The new owner, Sir William Greville, had an only son, whom it is

said he one night shot dead in Mickleton hollow. Ever since that woeful night the murdered boy's ghost has haunted the place. He is rarely seen, but passers-by were made aware of his presence by strange and unearthly moanings and screechings. Hence the name was given to him of the "Hooter." Though it is said that years have gone by since anyone heard these melancholy sounds, yet as we drive by the neighbourhood we are told of a Shipston man who, not more than three or four years since, riding on horseback by the copse a little after midnight, distinctly heard, and, what is more distinctly saw, the "Mickleton Hooter." He described him as mounted on a black hunter and gliding down the hillside, his long fair hair blown out by the wind, his right hand pointing to some object far away, and his eyes bright as glowing coals of fire. He made no noise other than the wild owl-like cry by which he was known. His steed glided over ditches and hedges, and when he reached the highway he swiftly passed by the Shipston man, whose nerves, as may easily be imagined, were well-nigh unstrung. This is proof enough that the work of laying the Hooter said to have been done about the close of the last century by Staunton of Hidcote, was poorly done. There is no doubt that if the Shipston man had not been so bewildered he would have seen with the Hooter the pack of hounds which are said to accompany him on his midnight expeditions. Beyond a day in bed no ill consequences seem to have come to this belated wayfarer; but the evidence is enough to convince the world that if the monks of Eynsham had not been deprived of their lands, Sir William Greville would not have bought it or have killed his son upon it, and there would have been no such visitant from the Underworld for three centuries to terrify the folk who in spite of ale-muddled brains try to find their way to their homes in peace.

It is curious that this legend should have found credence so long. I remember hearing of it almost thirty years since, and this afternoon I am told of it again as a real and trustworthy fact. I wonder if, after all, it is a variant of the Wild Hunter of Westphalia and Lower Saxony told of by Grimm in his Teutonic Mythology. There Hackelblock, as in those countries he is called, was doomed to continue to hunt either because he used to go to the chase even on a Sunday, or because on his deathbed he prayed God that for his share of heaven he might be let hunt till the judgment day. So from the woods he comes, his dogs barking and he hooting. Not a few villagers have heard the cry of his hounds and the blast of his horn, and some have even seen him astride his black headless horse rushing furiously after the wolf or the boar. Grimm gives several

pages to the elucidation of this legend. Of course it varies in many particulars, but it is at least noteworthy that here in Gloucestershire we should have a Hooter and one that in some respects answers to the Hooters found on the continent. I do not know whether the people hereabouts avoid building the front door of their cottages in a line with the back door lest the Hooter should pass through the house, as he is apt to do in Germany ; indeed, I do not think he is ever heard or seen except on the hillside and along the highway. Some incredulous folk will perhaps declare that this is no more than the crying, howling wind, which at times moans like a body in distress and at others hoots like the soft-feathered and silent-winged night-bird. But, then, if we are to listen to this sort of stuff we shall soon conclude there are no ghosts at all ; and then what would become of the positive assertion and the clear-cut testimony of the Shipston man, backed up as it is by the belief of three hundred years ?

The bright afternoon does not seem quite the time to talk about such things, but, gentle reader, we were merryhearted and we do not know that we ever wronged anybody in our life. Because you and I have never seen the wonders that sometimes appear to the people of these regions is no proof that such wonders are not to be seen. Rousseau says in "Eloisa" that "Men of little genius conclude that things which are uncommon have no existence" ; and I do not suppose that either you or I, notwithstanding our neighbour's opinion of us, care to think of ourselves as of "little genius." At all events there are in these cottages and villages which we pass many men and women whom no amount or kind of argument would convince that in the matter of apparitions their faith and the faith of their forefathers was wrong. Did not Richard Jago, a priest and a poet of the last century, vicar of Snitterfield and the man who sought to immortalize Ebrington in verse, preach a sermon upon "a conversation which was said to have passed between one of the inhabitants and an apparition in the churchyard of Harbury" ? Chastleton is not far from here, and we are told by the author of "Rambles among the Cotswolds" that the present rector of that place was sent for one day by a woman and asked to lay the spirit of her husband. She had a box ready, and requested the parson to put the spirit in the box and take both to a pond, and there lay him. It is also said that at Evenlode three clergymen joined in putting to rest in a brook the spirit of one of the old villagers. This was a facetious individual: he would keep quiet as long as the brook was full and if one of his two sons had a shilling for every sixpence the other had ; but he succumbed to the clergy. Nobody knows the power of a clergyman in such

affairs. During my curacy at Port Hope in Canada I was seriously asked to do the same thing. A man drove in from the country to get me to go and quiet a ghost which tried him beyond bearing. I listened to his story and excused myself, let us say, on the ground that I was only in deacon's orders, and therefore unable to deal with a ghost. To have argued against his belief would have been the fulness of folly.

About five o'clock we reach the tiny and ancient village of Ilmington, nestling among the hills on the edge of the valley in which lies Shipston. In all probability its straggling lanes mark the thoroughfares which before Norman kings reigned at Westminster, were trodden by Saxon hinds. The quaint stone houses with gabled roofs and latticed windows are of course later, but even they give evidence of considerable antiquity, and also, it may be added, of homely comfort and peasant-like independence. Several famous families have been connected with this place—for instance the Montfords, the Cannings, the Sheldons and the Palmers. In the time of the Wars of the Roses, a youth of the Somersetshire family of Brents found refuge in this village long enough, under the disguised name of John Buston, to fall in love with and to steal away the daughter of the Lord of Adminton and Stoke. In due time the adventurer received through his wife the estates of his father-in-law, and for four centuries the manor of Adminton and Stoke belonged to his descendants. There is a brass, dated 1487, in the north transept of the church, which adds further interest to this suggestion for a romance. The church, however, though prominent, as in most villages, and partly of Early English style, has little else of worth than this and similar monuments. A mural tablet on the west wall of the church, dated 1763, is to the memory of a strong-minded lady of the name of Palmer, who was entitled to quarter the arms of Plantagenet. She seems to have been neither law-abiding nor devout. When called to account for her neglect of public worship and threatened with prosecution, she one Sunday morning took a dung cart and jolted across a ploughed field to Ilmington; there, entering the church during service, she vigorously and in simple English anathematized church, parson and congregation. She then retired to her dung cart and returned home. This is one of the best remembered incidents in the history of this quiet town.

For Ilmington is quiet—even quieter than the other places we have seen to-day. Once it had a chalybeate spring which had some repute for its medicinal qualities, and by which it might have been a second Bath or Leamington; but destiny ordained otherwise, and this healthful and beau-

tifully situated village fell into the sweetest and most undisturbed rest. As we drive down the street, the dogs prick up their ears and the three or four women working in the gardens peep over the hedges, as though strangers did not appear every day. On the footpath stands a "wratch," as they here call a feeble old man, wearing a smock frock and leaning on a stout ash stick. The cottages are thatched, and in front of them are rose-bushes and damson trees and beehives. Making chains of dandelion stalks, picking cheeses and wearing print pinafores and shoes well-nailed and tipped, the children play in the grass by the wayside, while the bees buzz by them heedless of their merry prattle. The world has been kind to Ilmington; the martins make their mud nests under the eaves, and the people are Protestant enough to burn on the Fifth of November the effigy not only of the Pope, but also of any parson whose coat and vest are fashioned after the M. B. Guy Fawkes was no better than he should have been, but in the bonfires and the bell-ringing which I am told here gladden the dull autumn day, the Ilmington folk are doing their best to give him immortality; and it has been said, though I scarcely think it true, that as the church is orientated and thereby encourages superstition, either it will have to come down, or the parish will as a whole secede from the Church of England. The damage that this latter alternative suggests is too awful to contemplate, and I turn with relief to watch the ducks waddling across the road. Epicures, and not poets, care most for these happy-eyed and broad-billed birds, but others besides those who think most of them when trussed and smoking could appreciate these which now are tumbling over a broken peel lying in their way. The first one tripped in his attempt to hop over the peel, and the others try the same experiment, and as a result send the echoes of their quackery to the top boughs of the elms.

The peel, which is the long-handled, flat shovel used by the bakers to put their loaves into the oven, reminds me of a besom, and that again of the witches who used to travel on broomsticks. There was a time when a sight of these uncanny and anointed folk here abounded; and by the word "anointed" my reader will not understand other than that they were sent forth by the Wicked One, who, as everybody versed in witchcraft knows, has never hesitated to use for his purpose wrinkled and decrepit old dames. He gives to these favoured friends of his both a familiar spirit which enables them to do all sorts of things, and the power to assume the shape of some animal so that they can go to all sorts of places. One of the Ilmington witches took the form of a hare—at least some years ago a

farmer at Blackwell shot a hare and broke her foreleg, and at the same time the Ilmington woman had a broken arm for which she could give no satisfactory account. Nothing could be more certain. Another of these individuals used to bewitch people coming home from Stratford market. She would keep them for hours out in the cold night before she would let them pass. After some time she was caught and hanged, and in a grave made at the cross-roads where she had played most of her pranks a stake was driven through her body and she was pinned safely to the earth. Since then the farmers and tradesmen have occasionally been bewitched and kept out on market days long after sunfall, but there is every reason to believe it has been by the rosy cheeks and laughing eyes of maidens whose vows to renounce the wiles of the Wicked One are as fresh as the cowslips they pin in their bodice.

But we stay for an hour in Ilmington in order to visit an ancient native of the place, who, having in days gone by ventured to do some jingling with rhymes, somewhat to his own profit and much to his neighbor's delectation, has acquired the title of "Poet." There is something in the air of the place conducive to this sort of pastime. Thirty years since the parish priest of Ilmington ventured at Torquay to read "Hamlet" in public for the benefit of a local charity. For this he incurred the displeasure both of the Bishop of Exeter and of his own ordinary, the former desiring the incumbents of the several parishes in Torquay not to invite or permit him to officiate in any of the churches. There have been Scotchmen, so Dr. Boyd of St. Andrews tells us, who could not understand how any person could love God and read Shakespeare. But the people of Ilmington, from the respect they show to their own son of the muses, are of a happier frame of mind. To them he is the Poet. Indeed, though his name is only William Handy, yet he styles himself "William Poet Handy," speaks of himself as the Poet, and in the gate leading up to his neat thatched cottage has had cut out the letters W. P. H. In this cottage he has lived as tenant and owner for over fifty years, his own age having now risen to the allotted three score and ten. In front of the house is a flower garden where pink-tipped daisies and clusters of sweet-betsy grow beside the weedless paths, while at the back extends a large enclosure in which abound fruit trees and berry bushes. Close beside the back door, partly concealing the humbler premises, is a fine box hedge, and there are some box or yew trees cut into curious devices, one a peacock. In the garden is a good-sized arbor made of a huge tree—box, if I remember aright; and in the arbor stands a rustie chair made by the good man to commemorate the

jubilee of her most gracious Majesty. The poet is, by the way, an Englishman from the middle of the heart out : and a thorough-going Churchman and tory as well. He could drink with zest the toast : " Here's for a porcupine saddle and cobweb breeches for the enemies of Old England." More than that, we found him to be a quiet, genial and happy soul ; full of anecdote, kindly disposed to his neighbours, imbued with a sense of religion, and grateful for the mercies which have followed him all the days of his life. Three times had he been married, but, added he, as he told us of his matrimonial experiences, the third venture was a mistake : whether he reckoned it among the mercies he did not say. Of the blunder we presently had some proof.

When we called at his door the poet had not returned from Shipston, and we were afraid we should have to leave without seeing him ; but on driving through the narrow lane from his house, we met him and his cart. He is a market-gardener and this was market-day. We stopped him and told him who we were, and never was stranger welcomed more kindly than were we. He insisted on our going back to the house and picking some fruit in the garden : "'Tis still pretty middling," he added. We found the gooseberries excellent. In the meanwhile we contrived to get the conversation round to poetry—gently, for Master Handy is modest and reticent, and has to be drawn out of his intellectual solitude as wisely and delicately as a timid fish out of the water. " You have written some lines, Mr. Handy," I remarked. " So people have been pleased to call them ; but they flatter me." " Still," I went on to say after a pause in which I continued my attack upon a heavy-laden and spiny raspberry-cane ; " still, people are seldom mistaken in their judgment of their fellows." " Do you think so ? " he asked wistfully. I did not think so. I do not suppose I shall ever appreciate either the form or the matter of Walt Whitman's work—and some say that he was a poet, even as others think highly of Martin Farquhar Tupper : therefore my own taste being faulty, possibly the taste of others may be likewise errant and untrustworthy. However, I told my disciple of the Muses that I should much like to read some of his verse, and after a little persuasion he went into the house to get a bundle of poems. Professor Dowden or Mr. Saintsbury would complain of my calling them " poems " ; so would Oliver Wendell Holmes, but no matter. Even the judgment of those eminent critics may sometimes go astray, and after all what are they against the unanimous voice of Hmington ? There are people here who never saw a line of Shakespeare and never heard of Lord Tennyson, but I am pretty sure that not

one of the three gentlemen just named, nor for that matter even Mr. Andrew Lang, has ever read the pathetic verses on the "Murder of G. Kalabergo." And in that they are behind the good folk of this village.

Many great men have had a Xantippe for a wife, so in that trial and affliction Poet Handy differs not from his kind. It was both pleasant and painful to hear the quiet way in which he sought to still the sharp words of his "Other Half," as he stumbled about in searching for his papers. Their voices came through the open windows under the eaves. He has a short, stout figure, slightly stooping, with a round face, bright eyes and whitening hair; she is younger than he by perhaps ten or fifteen years, with thin lips, sharp nose and chin, shrill voice and rude manners. No one knows when she laughed last; and judging from what we heard she led the poet anything but a merry life. After a keen, sharp hail-like storm she came out of the house, and without bestowing the least look upon us proceeded to stir up the fire in a temporary hearth made in the garden and to fill the kettle for tea. Marrying a poet does not make amiable a surly woman: the cat though turned into a fair maid would still catch mice.

Master Handy soon followed with a big bundle of manuscripts and printed papers. We stood around him in the shadow of the pear trees while he picked out two or three of the broadsheets and read them off. Those that he thus entertained us with were written over forty years ago, and as they are fair specimens of a kind of literature that once circulated largely in the country, I shall put them into an appendix where my reader can indulge his curiosity. Had he seen this dear old man in the evening sunlight, partly reading and partly reciting these lines, he would perhaps discern in them a worth which, without such an association, I fear they will not be suspected to have. Prythee, sweet lector, turn over to the appendix and peruse these verses, or some of them, at once, and then remember, first, that this was the style of literature that once gladdened the firesides, and the hearts too, of the fathers of the hamlet; next, that the writer thereof was a plain, untaught villager, who, like Diocletian, grew cabbages, and after the fashion of a certain Bishop of Ely, cultivated strawberries, only, unlike them, he did this for a livelihood; and lastly, that the clergy and gentry of the neighbourhood encouraged the author by buying his sheets at from three pence to half a crown apiece, while the poorer folk sang them in the village tap-room after supper, or recited them to their children on a Sunday afternoon as suitable helps to an upright and a religious life. Newspapers were scarce in those days, and people could not be always reading the "Whole Duty of Man."

This done the Poet entertained us with a number of anecdotes and some recitations from his unwritten poems. I took down a few of these at his dictation, but I shall not venture to put them in print. They simply illustrate a type of character which was once common, and which I am thankful to say has not entirely died out of the old country life.

In his poorer days—for Master Handy was once less well off in this world's goods than he is now—he had occasion to lodge at a certain inn in Brailes. Forty or fifty years ago wages were “thin,” and it became a tiller of the soil who would provide against the rainy day to look keenly after the ha’pennies and the farthings. The inn keeper charged our friend for his three weeks’ entertainment at the rate of sixpence a day—not an extravagant price to those who know anything of London hotels, and especially of such as have an embankment view. But the Poet thought it too much, and when upon remonstrance with the hostess he found it could not be reduced, he united his poetical muse and his arithmetical skill in these lines :

Sixpence a day is three and six a week ;
 A man who asks for that must have a check :
 Three and six a week is nine pound two a year—
 The lodging’s very good : the price too dear.

“In those times,” he went on to tell us, “many was the day when I stood between the earth and the sky, and owned nothing but my own poor body and the clothes on my back. Once I started off to see my sister, at a time when work was slack, with but three ha’pence in my pocket. It’s over forty years ago now, and times have changed ; but it was a dull morning about the beginning of December, and I had some miles to walk over a road that was not as well kept as roads are nowadays. The air was just keen and damp enough to make an hungry and a lonely man feel cold and sad. But I kept on, and after a while I got to my sister’s cottage : she was now husbandless and childless. As I went by the window I peeped in. There was the poor woman sitting in front of a tiny bit of a fire with her face in her hands and her elbows on her knees, crying, I was pretty sure. I waited a few minutes and then I tapped at the door. She opened it, and when she saw me her face brightened up—she had a happy heart and a sweet face ; and now she’s with God and her loved ones. So I went in and she warmed me a mug of beer and put a little spice in it, and it was helpful after my dreary tramp. After a bit I said to her, ‘Jane, why were thee crying just now?’ ‘O William, I wasn’t crying.’ ‘But I saw thee, sister, as I came by the window ; what was it for?’

Then she told me that she hadn't a farthing in the house, and that she did not know which way to turn to get a morsel of bread or a faggot of wood. And I told her that I had three ha'pence and she should have two of them. She smiled; and then I went on to say that I would stay a day or two with her, and perhaps something would turn up. Well, loaves don't roll into cottages and logs do not tumble down the chimney, and I knew that unless we wished to starve I should have to stir myself. So after another mug of warm beer—it was small stuff left over from last harvesting—I went out into the chill air. My heart was bumping against the soles of my boots, as the saying is; but, then, I thought that even sparrows chirped as they searched for crumbs, and I must keep up. In my pocket I had some copies of my verses on the great hailstorm. Perhaps I might sell some. As I went along the road who should I see crossing a field, but the parson! You know him, sir, one of the kindest of men and one of the best musicians in England. Now's my chance, said I to myself; and up to him I went, and touching my cap asked him if he could help me by buying my poem on the great Hailstorm. 'Are you Poet Handy?' said he. 'I am, sir,' said I. 'Then,' said he, 'give me two copies, and here is half-a-crown for them; and if you go to the rectory and tell the butler I sent you, he will give you something to eat, and perhaps the servants may buy some of your verses.' I could scarcely find the words to thank him. He went on his way and I went to the parsonage, and sure enough the butler took me in, supplied me with a lot of bread and beef and a pot of ale that was fit for a Christian to drink, and then the servants bought up my little stock of poetry. They liked to hear about the Hailstorm; and when I left the house to go back to my sister with six or seven shillings in my pocket I felt as light as a cork. Before that was spent the bad weather turned and work came on, and I began to pull up hill."

"The clergyman you spoke of," said I, "is still living. He was an accomplished musician and used to play the organ at his own services."

"If you ever see him, sir, will you tell him that the man whom he helped that wintry day has not forgotten him?"

"I will do so, Master Handy; and with your permission I shall jot down your little story. But I was told that the other day in the stable at the 'Bell' at Shipston, you recited some lines you made about the 'Harrow.' I mean the old public house at Shipston of that name. Wouldn't you give them to us?"

He complied and looked over my shoulder as I wrote them down, telling me where to put the stops and explaining that the "narrowness"

spoken of in the first verse refers to the space in a hungry man which stretches—well, *ab umbil. ad spin.*—a most valuable figure.

When the Poet to Shipston market comes,
He generally to the Butcher's runs
If he finds himself too narrow ;
He buys some beef to have a treat,
And cooks it at the ' Harrow.'

A piece of beef affords relief
When hunger's giving pain ;
And a glass of beer my heart doth cheer ;
Then I'm refreshed again.

Swell'd with delight I has my pipe,
And smokes for half an hour ;
Then takes my flight, and bids good-night
To all upon the Stour.

I suggested the propriety of correcting the grammar and making a few alterations, but he observed that poets had a freedom in these matters which did not belong to prose. I did not like to dispute the point, being modest in the presence of genius and remembering that as a tree that is heavy laden with fruit breaks her own boughs, so when a poet falls into mistakes is it out of the exuberance of his imagination. But we must needs bid our entertainer good-bye. He is one of the kind who write the quaint lines that appear on tombstones, much to the amusement oftentimes of the stranger. Such men are worthy of acquaintance. They live their quiet life in these still villages unknown to the world, and when they die their name speedily passes from the memory of even their friends and neighbours. Nobody knows the author of that popular and delightful stanza which appears on thousands of tombstones in Christendom, and in the obituary column of the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* occurs more frequently than any other ode of like nature, the first line of which is

Afflictions sore long time he bore.

It is a sad loss, but there is now no help for it. Our Poet has jingled syllables and by his thrift, industry and patience he has made for himself a home and secured the respect of those around him. Were it not for the virago scraping potatoes yonder he would be the happiest man alive, and as it is he does not look as though he allowed so trifling and commonplace a circumstance as that to interfere seriously with his peace of mind. The knee breeches and the sleeved waistcoat show that he does not care for changing

fashions and new ideas. On a Sunday afternoon, before the bells ring for evensong, he retires to his arbor with his Bible, pipe and pot of beer, and also pencil and paper, and there while the butterflies flit in the warm sunbeams and the wasps test the sweetness of the plums, he smokes, and reads and meditates. If the inspiration come upon him, he at once takes down the thought and makes the rhyme; and when there is no inspiration, then he cons over the words of the Holy Book and suffers his imagination to take him beyond the summer clouds, even to the land that is very far off.

Almost every village has a cricket club. Ilmington is not an exception to the rule. We saw a game going on in a field not far from the last house. There was not much excitement. The men walked after the slow-flying ball; one youth in particular was as deliberate as though he were on his way to school. He dragged himself at a snail's pace over the ground; the other players meanwhile adjusting themselves to his time. The batsman did not hurry more in his runs, so that no undue advantage was taken. So quietly did the game go on that we were startled at hearing some one cry out to the gentle youth: "Move faster; take off your shoes and stockings so that the grass may tickle your feet!" Did the speaker ever have a mosquito bite him on the sole of his foot?

The sun had almost dropped behind the hills as we drove out of Ilmington, and already the twilight shades were creeping over the deeper parts of the valley. Few people passed us on the way: these are quiet roads, and one might walk for miles and not see a human being. There were, however, two or three immense flocks of starlings that fled over the fields and hedgerows in very clouds, and in one meadow we saw about a hundred and fifty sheep standing head to tail in two long unbroken lines with almost military precision. The first sheep had their heads towards a gate and, without heeding passers-by, the rest stood ready to go through as soon as the gate should be opened. In the gathering gloom they were an odd sight.

We soon reached Dascot, and in a few minutes more, Shipston—our journey ended but our day not over. It was our fate after supper to have an interview with a worthy who has done to many Shipston folk what Oliver le Dain did frequently to Louis the Eleventh. He has dabbled in both ecclesiastical and secular politics, but being a high Churchman and a conservative he is always found on the right side. The times, however, are against that same right side, which is not a refreshing thought; and the burden of my friend's conversation ran upon the condition of Shipston and the state of rural England, both being thought by him to be in the last stages

of degeneration. "We shall never," cried he, "produce another Lord Nelson or another Lord Beaconsfield, and at Shipston we shall never have another Parson Evans. Everything has gone to the dogs." Lucky for the dogs, thought I. In his opinion the evil which has befallen the country springs from the extension of the franchise to the irresponsible and uneducated classes. Why, he asked, should a man who has neither stick nor stake in the country, pays no taxes for its support and does not understand the first principles of social or political economy, have a voice in the destinies of the land and nation as great as he has whose whole being is inextricably woven into the very texture of both? In other words, should a servant have a vote equal to that of his master? These questions I did not venture to discuss; I never should, under the most favorable circumstances, any more than I should try to set to music the snip-snip of a barber's shop or to read the heart of a newspaper correspondent. There are some things to me past finding out, and I never could understand why a tradesman's son, if God gave him genius and made him a gentleman, should not be treated at least as courteously as is the man who is a lord only by the accident of birth. I suppose birth does go a long way, as, for instance, with horses and dogs; but I do not make out why, given the same intellectual, moral, physical and spiritual qualities, one man should not be esteemed as highly as another and allowed equally the free course of life. My friend could have told me, but I did not wish him to think I had even the smell of heresy upon me. He remembers the time, as well as I do, when the alms' women used to wear long, scarlet cloaks, which cloaks were given them about St. Thomas's Day, and not only proved to them a means of comfort and pride, but also showed that when Charity tried her hand on old paupers "not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these." And verily a scarlet cloak against the white snow looks almost as picturesque as a scarlet hood on the priest's surplice; and as Doctors of Divinity wear the hood because their studies, so it was said of old time, have brought them near to the blood of Christ, so, I suppose, the wearers of the cloak may be looked upon as very near to God. I am sure they are, but I do not like to see poverty thus arrayed. It is very nice for the people who buy the cloaks; it is, perhaps,—well, say just a little, less nice for the people who wear the cloaks. My friend laments that the latter are less kindly disposed to the former than are the former to the latter. This is not surprising; but, then, as he says, England is bent on self-destruction. Did Jeremiah ever act as village correspondent?

My down-hearted and broken-spirited acquaintance sells seeds as well

as handles scissors. He has been a benefactor to most of the canary birds and onion beds in the parish ; and if my neighbours only thought half as kindly of me as his neighbours do of him, I should be a happy man. They know his worth at handling either a bristly beard or a bristly question. His great weakness, paradoxically speaking, is his strength of feeling. He rumbles and blazes when confronted with a matter contrary to his taste, like a Vesuvius in eruption. He would treat his opponent with the ashes and cinders of his anger and contempt as the lava-streams and fire-showers treated Herculaneum. In other words he is excitable, and then sometimes sarcastic. You should have heard him speak upon the perversity of the church authorities in spoiling good schoolmasters to make inefficient parish priests and bishops. On this he waxed as eloquent as Archdeacon Farrar is apt to do at St. Margaret's when he is demolishing some huge puppet that he has industriously and deftly built up. I confess my cheeks tingled and my toes got fidgety as my friend poured forth his torrents of invective. The blacker his words became, the bluer grew his countenance. Oh, 'twas a fearful moment !

It seems that the new Bishop of ——— officiated last Spring at a confirmation, and his manner is said to have been sufficiently unaffable to give offence to both clergy and people. The Bishop is a low Churchman ; one of the kind, I believe, who has sunk so deep in the mire of Protestantism that he cannot get his legs out without losing both gaiters and shoes. He also wears those robes which ever since, and probably from before, Thomas Killigrew wrote that facetious comedy called "The Parson's Wedding," have been known as the "Magpie Suit." The Puritans had a deal to say about "pied prophets," but when the Puritans have had a chance they have taken very kindly to lawn and satin. So has this bishop, and his dignity hangs heavily upon him. Among other things he ordered the vergers not to allow the clergy to go into the vestry while he was present : he remembered that the inferior clergy are often obtrusive. They had, therefore, to vest wherever they could, but not in his presence ; nor were they to see his shirt-sleeves. "The next time his Lordship comes," said the parish clerk, "he will bring with him his lady's maid." The late bishop was genial and easy of access, and the difference was felt keenly. "Another schoolmaster," wound up my friend sententiously.

I acknowledge that I saw nothing so very awful in this, but it must have been bad to have drawn out so much feeling on the part of him who spoke to me. We parted : he relieved and I tired. For the day has been long, and not without deep thankfulness do I drop the extinguisher on the candle by my bedside, and say

Good night and joy be wi' you a'.

Appendix.

THE reader will here find copies of three of the broadsheets published by our Ilmington poet. Forty years since, as I have said, these verses had a popularity among the people of the neighborhood, which it is safe to say nothing that the reader with a more cultured taste will style poetry, has ever had. They were recited and sung everywhere, preserved among the letters hid away in the big family Bible, and the poet's health was toasted by folk who never heard of John Milton or Mat Prior. If my reprint serve no other purpose than to illustrate the class and style of literature which was once popular and common in the villages of England, I shall have done that which will please the lover of human nature and of ancient ways. And though this sort of thing is now out of date, and the critic will find fault with more perhaps than I could point out were I censoriously inclined, yet I am sure none will miss seeing in these lines a spirit of reverence, a pathos, and a considerable power of description. Discerning these gifts, most likely some who take the trouble to read them will be glad to think that the old village life produced men such as William Handy, able to help their neighbors, a little way, at least, towards the development of mind and heart.

VERSES,

COMPOSED ON THE DESTRUCTIVE

❖ HAILSTORM ❖

*That occurred at Shipston-on-Stroud, and the neighbourhood, on the 21st of June, 1851,
which destroyed a great quantity of Glass in the Windows and Greenhouses,
and nearly destroyed all the Corn in the fields wherever it passed over.*

ALSO,

An account of the destructive storm, that visited (on the same evening) the districts
of Lancashire, Cheshire and Yorkshire.

BY W. HANDY, ILMINGTON.

Come listen, people far and near,
While I to you unfold,
The tidings of a thunderstorm
Which late I did behold.

In Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-one,
The twenty-first of June,
On Saturday morning I set out,
To cross the fields of bloom.

At Todenham town I soon arrived,
The morn was very fair,
Between the hours of twelve and one
There seem'd a change of air.

I had scarcely pass'd the village through,
When the sky began to lower,
The sun for some time ceas'd to shine,
And then came on a shower.

When this was o'er I travell'd on,
My verses for to sell,
But quick came on a thunder-clap,
And then the hailstones fell.

A person kindly called me in,
To shelter from the storm,
And grieved much I was to hear,
A female laugh and scorn.

The mother being sorely grieved,
Said, "do not be so vain,
"It is the Lord that sends the storm,
"I hear you scoff with pain."

She then call'd on the name of Christ,
And said in earnest prayer,
"The Lord have mercy on thy soul,
"And all the village spare."

Now every woman, child or man,
When this great storm was o'er,
They thought that ne'er on all the earth
Was such a storm before.

Not since the days when Egypt's king
Did heaven's own will assail,
And God sent down for punishment
A storm of fire and hail.

Like broken ice the hailstones fell,
 And smote both tree and field,
 Which for the use of every one
 Their kindly fruit they yield.

Next I went on to Welford town,
 Across the fields of grain,
 There I beheld much smitten corn,
 Which cannot rise again.

By all the road I pass'd along
 Much damage there I saw,
 The wheat struck down, the beans were cut,
 The blossom from the straw.

The farmers are with sorrow struck,
 When they behold their corn,
 And some say, "We shall ruin'd be,
 "By this most awful storm.

"For all our crops are nearly spoil'd,
 "Which we with pleasure viewed,
 "But now in sorrow we behold
 "Our fields with ruin strew'd."

The gardens are much injured, too,
 I saw as I did pass,
 The nurserymen have losses great
 In fruit and broken glass.

Some people, perhaps, will not believe
 The words that here are spoke,
 But Shipston and the neighbourhood
 Have half their windows broke.

For miles around it was severe
 In the neighbouring counties,
 And much destruction has occurred
 To heaven's growing bounties.

At Shipston-on-Stour, Worcestershire,
 And in the villages around,
 The damage is supposed to be
 Quite twenty thousand pounds.

That afternoon the mighty storm
 To Lancashire it went,
 There men may see for many a day
 Where it its fury spent.

At Chedderton the large park trees
 Up by the roots were tore,
 Houses and walls the rushing flood
 From their foundations bore.

At Radcliffe bridge a horse was killed
 By lightning on the spot,
 And an infant in its mother's arms
 Which shared that fatal lot.

What can the parent's feelings be,
 The thought will make one shudder,
 And she herself was injured much,
 But likely to recover.

The mother's heart is nearly broke,
 Her mind can take no rest,
 For thinking of the little child,
 That died upon her breast.

In storms the Lord doth show His might,
 And every wind that blows,
 Whate'er may be our worldly loss,
 It still His mercy shows.

In losses think of patient Job,
 For patience brings reward,
 He lost his children and his wealth,
 But still he prais'd the Lord.

VERSES.

COMPOSED ON THE LAMENTABLE DEATH OF

◁ JAMES FARLEY, ▷

(A Native of Mickleton,)

AND A STRANGER, KNOWN BY THE NAME OF NIX,

WHICH OCCURRED, BY ACCIDENT,

Within a few days of each other, in and near the Cutting at the west-end of the
Mickleton Tunnel, on the Oxford and Wolverhampton Railway ;

The first on the 25th Sept., the other on the 13th Oct., 1851.

BY W. HANDY, ILMINGTON.

ONCE more, my friends, I am come round, Sad news for to declare, And to remind you of that day For which we must prepare !	The smith had now his coffee boil'd, And got his breakfast ready, Which he often did, and caution'd him, When working, to be steady.
Another warning speaks aloud, And speaks to you and me, The bell has tolled—in which we've heard— The death of Young FARLEY !	For Farley seem'd so venturesome When he was working there, Which caused the blacksmith for to say, "Remember !—you take care."
September on the twenty-fifth, He left his mother's cot, And went to work upon the line, Which proved his dying spot.	Now breakfast time it was gone by, And Farley he went out ; The other train was coming down, He thought he heard them shout.
This young man used to drive the tip, When first the line began ; But for the space of his last week He with the full trains ran.	For part of this was left behind, Which had run off the road, The other part had broken loose, And coming with its load
And when he took his last train out, It then was breakfast time, He went into the blacksmith's shop, Which stands just by the line.	The wheels were now going round so fast, The spokes you could not see, And Farley ran to throw the sprag, Which caus'd his death to be.

But now he could not sprag the wheel,
 To stop the whirling train,
 He thought at last of taking hold,
 But instantly was slain.

By taking hold, he thought to run,
 But that was all in vain,
 The cross-piece caught him on the back,
 And turn'd him to the train.

All this was in an instant done,
 Before a word was spoke,
 And every bone within his frame
 Beneath the wheels were broke.

So suddenly he was struck down,
 No groan or moan was heard,
 Nor yet a struggle on his frame—
 He died without a word.

Four men then bore him to the inn,
 Their feelings were much hurt,
 And every man lay down his tools,
 And went from off the work.

Like thousands more — when troubles
 come,
 And danger seemeth nigh,
 They then begin to feel afraid,
 And for a moment cry.

But cries alone will not avail,
 To take our souls to heaven,
 But we must pray to Jesus Christ,
 To have our sins forgiven.

The news was now soon spread around,
 And reach'd his Mother's ears,
 Which only multiplied the grief
 She'd borne for many years.

O how she wept, and griev'd at heart,
 When this sad news did come ;
 At length she cried, " I am bereaved
 Of my beloved son."

So let us now more careful be,
 And take heed of our ways,
 For many here have met their death,
 And not liv'd half their days.

James Farley's gone to his long home,
 His weeping mother cries ;
 God rest his soul, now in his grave
 His mangled body lies.

A fortnight and three days being gone,
 Another man was killed,
 By a fall of earth, upon that line
 Where Farley's blood was spilled.

This man, he being a stranger here,
 Of him I say but little,
 Another, hurt at the same time
 Was took to the Hospital.

Let these sad deaths remind us all,
 Our time is drawing nigh,
 And put the question to ourselves—
 " Are we prepared to die ? "

VERSES

COMPOSED ON THE MURDER OF

◀ G. KALABERGO. ▶

Giovanni Marie Ferdinando Kalabergo, was an Italian Jeweller, and had resided at Banbury for upwards of forty years ; he was shot on Willscott-hill, on the evening of the 10th of January last, by his nephew, Gullielmo Giovanni Bazetti Kalabergo, who had lately come over from Italy and had only resided with his uncle about ten weeks. He was tried and convicted for the offence at the Oxford Assizes and executed on the 22nd of March, 1852.

BY WILLIAM HANDY, ILMINGTON.

Ye natives of this land I pray,
That would your feelings show,
Come purchase now of me to-day,
Before I further go,

Unto these lines that here are wrote,
Pray for a moment spend,
And hear the subject on the youth
Who shot his kindest friend.

Kalabergo was the man we hear,
That met this awful fate,
By one that was his kinsman near,
Who sought his life to take.

A jeweller was this man by trade,
And oft-times travelled wide,
But ne'er had felt the least afraid,
When riding side by side,

By him with whom he had such care,
And brought across the sea,
In order that he soon might share
His trade and property.

In Banbury town he made his home,
And by industry got
A horse and trap there of his own,
To take things from his shop.

Two days from home he had been out
A usual round had been,
Which shortly after brought about
This sad and murderous scene.

The business of the day being done,
They turned for home again,
But no thought in his mind had run,
That he should soon be slain.

Tho' standing on the brink of death,
This wicked deed was planned,
And shortly after yields his breath
Unto a murderer's hand.

This nephew now was walking by,
Who had the pistol got,
To Willscott-hill they soon drew nigh
He there his uncle shot.

This was the friend he thought to trust
 In care of all his wealth,
 One on which you might think just
 As worthy as himself.

But man by nature's so defiled,
 That came by Adam's fall,
 And enters every mother's child,
 And brings death on us all.

But none would think a man like this,
 Possessed of such a friend,
 Would sacrifice his hope of bliss,
 To such a wicked end.

Some person distant heard the shot,
 When travelling on that way,
 Who shortly came unto the spot,
 And found the body lay.

And several more not far behind,
 Came up the corpse to view,
 Which to their sorrow they did find,
 A man whom they well knew.

The news soon went to Banbury town
 And filled each mind with woe,
 Still they hoped he might be found
 Who laid his body low.

For none in years advanced so far,
 Was more beliked than he,
 The way he's gone to heaven's bar,
 He paved with charity.

When first a stranger to this land,
 His acts of love were shown,
 To the distressed he lent his hand,
 And soon became well known.

Ask where you may it is the same,
 By high or low degree,
 For miles around he bears the name,
 "A man of Charity."

This murderous man could take no rest
 But shortly ran for home,
 A fire was kindled in his breast,
 Against his heart of stone.

The craft he used this to conceal,
 Struck numbers with surprise,
 For many thought his grief was real,
 And then he told such lies.

A month before the time we're told,
 It seems the plot he laid,
 He bought the pistol and the mould
 And then the bullets made

With which he meant to shoot his friend
 When he a chance could see,
 Which caused his own life for to end
 Upon that fatal tree.

This wicked man was soon found out
 That did this murderous deed,
 Still lies proceeded from his mouth,
 The people to deceive.

But after this within the cell,
 He to the priest confessed,
 And said, "I did my uncle kill,
 " Which much disturbs my rest.

" Great God have mercy on my soul
 Though guilty as I be,
 Pray, wash me clean, and make me whole
 Through Christ who died for me.

" My sentence now is to be hung,
 My friends will long bewail
 The loss of me, their wicked son,
 Now lying in Oxford jail."

This little rhyme I now must end,
 Which is alas, too true,
 God rest the soul of that dear friend,
 Killed by his own nephew.

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